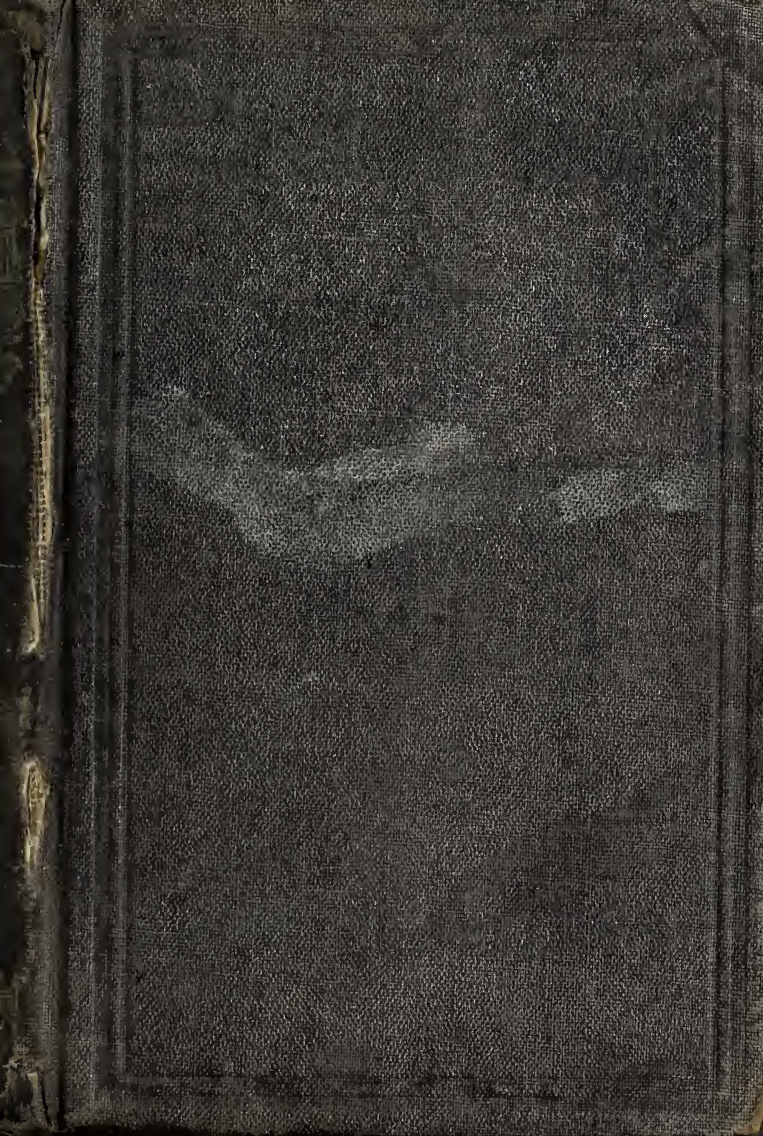




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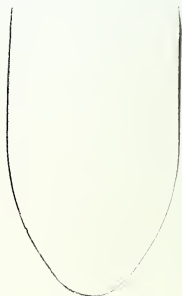
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LILIAN:

A Tale

OF

THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.



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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages are written for young people. The story, though imaginative in most of its incidents, is a faithful representation not only of the trials and persecutions to which godly people were exposed, but of customs, manners, and daily life in England, three hundred years ago.

Indeed, the incidents are not altogether imaginative. It is a fact that a daughter was, in the reign of Queen Mary, compelled to set fire with her own hands to the fagots surrounding the stake to which her Protestant father was chained; it is a fact also that many young persons not so old as Lilian were martyred "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ;" and it is true that the death of Queen Mary was the signal for the deliverance of some who had been condemned to the

stake, and for whom the fires of persecution were near being kindled.

It is hoped, then, that this story may be useful in stirring up the minds of its young readers to devout thankfulness to God that the days of such persecution have passed away in their country ; so that they can adopt the grateful language of the Psalmist, and say, “ The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places ; yea, we have a goodly heritage ; ” and also in leading them more highly to prize that sacred volume which is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and for love and devotion to which so many sufferings were endured by the martyrs of other times, who could say with the apostle Paul : “ But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

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L I L I A N.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAVELERS.

AT the close of a summer day a little more than three centuries ago, two travelers might have been seen plodding along a rough and dusty English high-road. They were both females, and there was much disparity in their years. One was old and wrinkled; and from beneath the *curch*, or hood, which covered her head, a few locks of snowy white hair straggled, and gently waved in the evening breeze. Her dress was homely in its texture, but neat and clean, save that the dust of a day's

journey had settled on it, and was more apparent because of the dark hue of the former, and the white, chalky nature of the latter. In her time this wayfarer had been tall of stature; but age and infirmity had laid their withering hands on her: she was shrunken, and bent, and feeble.

By her side, and led by her thin and trembling hand, was a little girl, scarcely more than six or seven years old, as one might have judged. The child was exceedingly fair, and pleasant to look upon, though her cheeks were just at that time wet with tears. She, too, was clothed in black garments, excepting only a small white linen cap, or mutch, which partially covered her head, but not so as to hide the bright flaxen hair which fell in natural curls on her shoulders.

The travelers were little encumbered with baggage — a small bundle, carried by the old woman in her disengaged hand,

and of no great weight, probably contained all their worldly wealth.

"Have we much farther to walk, grandam?" said the child in plaintive accents.

"Are you weary, Lily?" asked the aged traveler.

"Very, very;" and fresh tears, falling from the full bright eyes of the little one, rolled down her pale cheeks.

"Poor child! Poor Lilian!" murmured the old woman; "our sad journey is not yet ended. It will take many, many days before our wanderings are over. But we will find a resting-place for this night soon."

"I am very tired; oh, so tired!" sobbed little Lilian disconsolately.

"We will sit down and rest us, darling:" and the elder traveler drew near to the roadside, and placed the child carefully on a mossy bank; then, before seating herself by her grandchild's side, she untied her bundle, and took from it a piece of brown bread and a small wooden cup.

“We can sup here, Lilian,” said she; “and you will be refreshed as well as rested.”

A spring of clear water near the spot sufficed the poor wayfarers for quenching their thirst; the bread gave them a scanty meal; and the poor child was refreshed. She wiped away the traces of her recent tears, and smiled as she looked up into her grandmother's wrinkled countenance.

“And where shall we lodge through the night, grandam?” she asked.

“The good Lord will provide us with shelter, my child. It may be that we shall meet with some kind Samaritan, as we did yesternight, who will take compassion on us; or, if we are hard bestead and benighted, we shall scarcely fail to find a hostelry, where they will not refuse us a pallet for ready payment.”

“I do not like these hostelries, grandam,” said the child. “The men are so rough-spoken, and the pallets are so hard.”

“Lily, darling, you have forgotten of whom it is written that ‘foxes have dens, and birds of heaven have nests; but man’s Son hath not where he shall rest his head.’ ”

“No, grandam, I have not forgotten. But think you the blessed Lord Jesus would have been over-pleased had he been in such company as we fell in with two nights ago? Surely he would have scourged them out of the house, when he heard their rudeness and the great curses that they spoke, as he did the wicked men of his Father’s temple.”

“My child, you do not understand: but we will not talk of this now; and lest we be hindered in our devotions as we were on that evening, we will read a portion of the blessed evangel; for it is written, that ‘not only on bread liveth a man, but in each word that cometh of God’s mouth.’ ”

Saying this, the aged woman took from her

bundle a volume which she reverently opened. But before she commenced reading, she glanced with some care at the road on either hand, as though guarding against interruption from any chance passers-by. Not that any positive danger was at that time to be apprehended from detection in the act of reading the Scriptures — for it was in the reign of the sixth Edward, when persecuting laws were remitted — but personal insult might result; and past sad experience had taught suspicion as well as caution to those who, like this poor woman, had endured persecution for Christ's sake and his gospel. ✓

The road was clear, however; and, with a subdued and trembling voice, the poor woman commenced reading words of comfort and encouragement. It was a quiet and interesting scene. The sun was near setting; and the lengthened shadows of tall hedgerow trees were cast upon the road.

- No habitations, and, as I have said, no human beings besides these two lonely ones, were near. Over them the high luxuriant hedge beneath which they sat formed a verdant canopy; and the only sounds to be heard, distinct from the feeble utterances of the reader, were the occasional twitterings of hedge-warblers near; the distant cawing of rooks overhead, returning to their colony; the more distant song of a nightingale; and the occasional faint bleating of sheep from some unseen and far-off pasture.

And so, on their mossy resting-place, sat these two weary travelers; the child with her fair and delicate arm thrown across the lap of the aged woman, and her head resting lightly upon her bosom, as she looked up into the worn countenance with confidence and love, and listened for a while to the words which fell from those feeble lips, —

“Be not your heart afraid,” so read the wayfarer, “nor dread it: ye believen in

God, and believe ye in me. In the house of my Father be many dwellings: if any thing less, I had said to you; for I go to make ready to you a place. And if I go and make ready to you a place, eftsoon I come, and I shall take you to myself, that, where I am, ye be. And whither I go ye witen, and ye witen the way.... I am way, truth, and life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.... He that seeth me seeth also the Father.... And whatever ye axen the Father in my name, I shall do this thing, that the Father be glorified in the Son. If ye axen any thing in my name, I shall do it. If ye loven me, keep ye my commandments. And I shall pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to dwell with you withouten end; which Spirit the world may not take, for it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye should know him, for he shall dwell with you, and he shall be in you.

I shall not leave you fatherless, I shall come to you. Yet a little, and the world seeth not now me ; but ye shall see me, for I live, and ye shall live.” *

It was a light burden — that poor child — even to her aged and feeble relative ; but she had gradually reclined more heavily, and on looking up from her book, the reader perceived that the little one was no longer a listener ; her eyes were closed, and a pearly drop or two hung and glistened on her long and silken eyelashes. Overcome by weariness, Lilian had fallen asleep.

The elder traveler closed the book softly, as softly adjusted the young slumberer, so that her head should rest on her own lap ; but before she did this she bent over the child, and kissed her cheek ; then she sat

* Wycliffe's version of the New Testament, John xiv. 1-19. Though more modern versions of the Bible had come into use at this period, yet in country districts, especially in the midland counties, Wycliffe's version held its ground.

quietly watching the gentle heaving and falling of Lilian's bosom, and the occasional smiles which played unconsciously on her lips.

An hour passed away thus silently, and then Lilian awoke. But by this time the shades of evening had closed in, and star after star had appeared in the deep blue sky.

"Grandmother!" cried the startled child; "what has happened to us? where are we?"

"Nothing has happened, Lily, only that the Lord hath given sleep to his beloved. You have slept, my sweet one; and while you slept the night came on."

"And we have no home!" said Lilian, mournfully; and she slightly shivered, for the cold chill of night was falling. "But I have had such a happy dream, grandam, if it were not more than a dream."

"Yes, Lilian, you smiled as you slept; I

noticed it. You shall tell me your dream as we walk on towards our resting-place for the night." And the aged woman rose, and lifting her small bundle, extended the other hand to the child.

And so, as they slowly passed along, Lillian told her dream, — how in a large and beautiful garden, such as surely she had never seen on earth, she had wandered on and on, lonely for a time, but not sorrowful, while she listened to sweet and solemn music, until she suddenly heard herself called by name, and turning herself round, had fallen into the embrace of her own dear mother; not as she had seen her on earth, careworn and troubled, but in such beauty as she never could have conceived, and smiling so lovingly upon her; and also that she felt that mother's warm kisses on her cheek, while another voice — it was her dear martyred father's, whom she did not see, for her face was hidden in her mother's

bosom, but his voice reached her ears, and she heard him say, "Lilian, Lilian, be thou faithful to the death, and to thee shall be given a crown of life." And then all faded away.

Lilian's grandmother smiled to herself when she heard the little maiden tell her dream; for she remembered whispering these very words softly, as the damsel lay sleeping on her knee; and she remembered the kisses with which she had approached the little one's cheek. But she said not this aloud; "for why," thought she, "should I weaken the impressions made on Lilian's soul? And, truly, it may well be that the poor lamb may need to be strengthened by this heavenly exhortation in the thorny paths of life she may have to tread. May the Lord help her to travel on as a good servant of Christ Jesu!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FARM-HOUSE.

NEAR a certain small town in Oxfordshire was an old house half in ruins. In times gone by this house had been the stronghold of a race of petty barons. It was built of rough-hewn stones, its walls were very thick, it was surrounded by a moat, close to the outer walls, which enclosed a court-yard, and the only entrance to the building was over a drawbridge which could be raised at a few minutes' notice, and was always drawn up at night. But these precautions did not save its owner from violent death, nor the stronghold itself from a fierce and successful assault. In the civil wars of the White and

Red Roses, which raged a hundred years before the date of our story, the last baron was slain, and his house became in a manner desolate.

Other changes had taken place. The moat had been drained dry, and was now partly filled up with rubbish of the ruins, among which sprung up whole forests of vicious stinging-nettles that were allowed to grow undisturbed from year to year. A causeway had taken the place of the demolished drawbridge; the stout, oaken, iron-studded gate was decayed, and stood always open, flung back on its rusted hinges; and the broken walls were in some parts overgrown with ivy, while elsewhere the seed of wall-flowers had taken root, and grown luxuriantly.

The old house was not deserted, however, though its character was changed. It had become the peaceful home of a good-natured farmer, who thought of nothing

less than of fighting ; and who found room enough in the uninjured portion of the house to accommodate his household, making use of the ruins as enclosures for cattle.

The domestic arrangements of a farmhouse three hundred years ago were not very complicated, and the conveniences were far from numerous ; while luxuries, such as the laboring man's family of the present day constantly enjoys, were undesired because they were unknown. I do not think that there was even much substantial comfort to be ordinarily found in farm-houses of that date ; at any rate, there was what would now be considered great discomforts in that which I am describing. The bare walls and stone floors were damp and cold even in summer ; and every breeze that blew found admittance through the ill-fitted casements of the chambers. In the hall or kitchen, where all the household met from day to day, was a large and wide

hearth, opening to an enormous chimney, which, if it allowed the smoke of the wood fires beneath to depart (which was not always the case), gave admittance, equally free, to wind and rain, so that on a stormy day a fierce contest was kept up, in which the three elements, fire, air, and water, took part; and great was the turmoil they made.

But let me speak respectfully of the chimney of that old house; for it was looked upon with reverence and envy by every cottager in the hamlet, whose mud-built huts boasted no such ornament, and the smoke from whose fires had to escape from open doors and windows as it might, unless there was a hole made in the roof for this especial purpose. And when I speak of windows, you are not to imagine casements of glass; for glass was too precious at that time to be used by common people, to whom light was admitted (when win-

dows were closed) through oiled linen, or thin pieces of horn.

Would you like to know how the farmhouse I am describing was furnished? The inventory will not take long to set down. In the hall was a long oaken table, very strong and heavy, with two or three benches or forms for men and maids, and two wooden chairs for the farmer and his wife. There was a great kist or chest for holding the Sunday garments of the family, and a rough sideboard, on which were placed a number of wooden trenchers and cups for daily use, and a smaller number of pewter plates, kept bright for show. This was all. As to the chambers, they were yet more scantily provided with furniture. The farmer and his wife had indeed the luxury of a flock bed, and a sack of chaff for a pillow; but the servants and children lay on straw pallets, with little besides a coarse rug to cover them.

On the summer night of which I have spoken in the former chapter, the household of Master Fletcher, the farmer, were assembled in the hall or kitchen, or, as they called it, the *salle*, of the old house. They were at their evening meal, which that night was unusually late, for Master Fletcher had been to market, and had not long returned, and his two farm servants had been busy in the fields till the light failed them.

The supper was abundant enough, but not very dainty. It consisted of coarse rye bread, and home-cured bacon, together with a large brown dish of colewort which smoked on the board. Nor was their manner of feeding particularly delicate, for all helped themselves to the bread and boiled greens as they listed; and forks being either unknown to these plain rustics or despised by them, a very free and unrestrained use was made of their fingers. I

must not omit to say that the viands were washed down by draughts of small, sour, and hopless beer. Little light was afforded to this primitive and frugal meal. Two rush-wicked candles of home manufacture feebly glimmered above the board, and at a little distance seemed but as sparks in the gloomy expanse around. Not much light was needed, however; and the supper proceeded, silently indeed so far as the human voice was concerned, but with much diligence and good appetites.

Those who surrounded the board were eight in number. These were the farmer and his wife, neither of whom was much over forty years in age, and who were seated together at the end of the board. On their right hand sat in a row two maidens, whose appearance betokened much familiarity with the rougher employments of a country life, and young Guy Fletcher, a laughing tricksy lad, about ten years old,

but whose exuberant spirits were now subdued, either by sleepiness or by respect to his father. On the opposite side of the board were ranged the two farming men already mentioned, and an old gray-headed shepherd, John Middlemas by name.

The meal was nearly concluded, and the men and maids were preparing to withdraw to their several chambers, when a light hesitating knock, twice or thrice repeated, was heard at the outer door. No great alacrity was manifested in obedience to the summons, for such an interruption was unwonted at that late hour; and when at length Kate, the dairy-woman, unwillingly drew back the wooden bolt and half opened the door, she suddenly and quickly retreated, declaring, with a faint shriek, that a black ghost stood without.

“Thou art a foolish wench,” said the farmer, good-temperedly; “methinks a ghost would not trouble itself to knock at our

door when there are so many cracks and holes in the old house by which it might enter in at its pleasure."

"If it be not a ghost, master, the thing is a witch, and that is the worser of the two, I trow," muttered the trembling damsel; but the words were spoken under breath, and meanwhile the farmer himself had crossed the hall, and thrown the door wide open.

Truly there was neither ghost nor witch at the threshold; but simply two poor way-worn travelers, asking humbly to be permitted to rest under some cover until morning.

"You are late on the road, mistress," said Ralph Fletcher, not unkindly, but bluntly.

"We have been belated, sir," said the pleader in feeble, and, as it seemed, sorrowful tones. "We were weary, and we sat down to rest, and my poor grandchild

fell asleep on my lap; and this country being strange to us" —

"And wherefore should you be traveling in a strange country?" interposed the farmer, doubtingly. "Know ye not, good dame, that women and children are best at home, wherever that home may be?"

"Alas, sir," returned the suppliant, mildly and yet more sorrowfully than she had before spoken, — "it is our unhappy lot to have no present home, save that to which we are journeying. But we ask not charity, sir, save the Christian charity of kindness; I have wherewithal to pay for such lodging and food as we may require."

"Nay, dame," said the farmer, who had been studying the stranger's countenance as closely as the pale starlight would permit, and had also cast inquiring and compassionate glances towards the child who clung to the aged woman's side; "we sell

not hospitality ; and since it is as you say, and there is no place near where you can lodge, now that the nunnery which was once hard by is come to naught, and the poor nuns are scattered, — enter, in the name of Saint Catherine, and if you can persuade the goodwife to give you lodgement, I say you not nay : ” and Ralph Fletcher drew aside from the doorway to make room for the wayfarers.

The dialogue had not been unheard by those within ; and when, in compliance with the master’s permission, the strangers stepped into the hall, seven pairs of eyes were fixed with curiosity upon them ; the more that, ere she advanced many steps, the aged traveler halted, and lifting her eyes, pronounced a benediction on all around in the apostolic words, “ Peace to this house ! ”

Not many more words were spoken ; but these few were in unison with the feeling

which had prompted Ralph Fletcher to admit the strangers. Perhaps the age and apparent feebleness of the one, and the fair young countenance of the other, together with their homeless condition, pleaded powerfully in their favor. It was plain, too, that they were of a rank above that of common vagrants and beggars. But above all, there was a strong emotion in the breast of the farmer's wife which brought unwonted tenderness to her voice and tears to her eyes, as she bade the travelers welcome. She thought of her own little daughter, whom, not many months before, she had watched through a long illness, and at last followed to the churchyard.

“Sit ye down both of ye to the board,” said the farmer, heartily; “and take what you will. Thanks to Saint Catherine, we have no need to be miserly in our meat and drink, and I trow you are not too dainty to feed after us. You know the old prov-

erb, mistress: 'Better be at the end of a feast than at the beginning of a fray.'"

The aged traveler made a suitable reply, and seated herself and the child on the bench vacated by the two maids; but either their previous meal under the hedge by the roadside, or fatigue, had taken away the sharpness of appetite.

"You are a poor trencher-woman," said the farmer when the old woman returned thanks for what she and the child had eaten; "but since you say you have had enough, it is not for me to contradict you."

"And how far have you traveled with that pretty child?" demanded the farmer's wife, whose eyes had been fixed on Lilian ever since she had entered.

"From London, kind mistress," said the old pilgrim.

Mistress Fletcher uttered an exclamation of surprise, coupled with the name of Saint Catherine: "Did ever any one hear the

like?" said she. "No wonder the poor little bird is tired and droops."

"We traveled not from London in one day," said the guest.

"One day or many, it is the same. A long cruel way it is to drag a poor innocent. Why, dame, I have lived forty years and more, and have never been ten miles from home in all that time : and this poor child'— There was such evident and stern reproof in Mistress Fletcher's tone, that the guest was fain to reply that urgent business had compelled her and the child also to travel countryward, but they hoped ere many days to reach their journey's end.

"Ah! well, we each know our own business best, dame," replied the farmer's wife; "and I will not demand of you what yours may be, nor whither you are bound. But I may be so bold as to ask by what name this fair child and yourself also may be remembered hereafter."

“The name by which I am known is Margaret Butler,” said the old woman, without a moment’s hesitation; “and this dear child is the orphan daughter of my son: her name is Lilian.”

“A pretty name and a pretty child,” interposed the farmer; “but methinks, Bridget (this to his wife), that Lilian and her grandam would rather be resting than talking; and they will be looking to know in what manner they are to be disposed of till morning.”

The question was soon set at rest. There were unoccupied rooms in the old house, and there was clean dry straw enough near at hand. In a few minutes, therefore, the weary wayfarers were conducted to their apartments; and being commended by Mistress Fletcher to the protection of Saint Catherine, which name seemed indeed a household word with the farmer and wife, they were left to their repose.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES.

AND pray who was Lilian Butler? and who was Lilian's grandmother? and why were they traveling the country on foot? You may be sure that these questions passed through the minds of more than one of the members of Ralph Fletcher's household on the night of the strangers' arrival at the farm-house. But as, with praiseworthy delicacy, they abstained from asking these questions, I must request my readers also to restrain any curiosity they may feel on the same subject. For the present, other and more pressing matters are before me.

On awaking in the morning soon after dawn, Margaret Butler was alarmed by a

deep, unnatural flush in the countenance of her grandchild, who lay on the straw-bed in an uneasy and disturbed slumber. And yet more was she distressed, when, on being gently aroused with a loving caress, poor Lilian moaned as in great pain, and, in the words of the Shunamite's son, cried out, "My head! my head!"

In truth, the child was fever-stricken. It may be that the fatigues of hard travel had weakened her frame, and the insidious disease had insinuated itself with the night air, when she lay sleeping on her grandmother's lap under the roadside hedge on the previous evening. But, whatever might be the cause, it was manifest that for that day, and for many succeeding days, the little pilgrim would be physically unable to continue her journey.

I will not say that the farmer's wife received this startling intelligence with perfect equanimity. The travelers were

strangers ; and though there was an air of respectability about the aged woman, and much that was attractive in the child, she could not tell what evil hearts or base designs were hidden under these flattering exteriors. Besides, Mistress Fletcher had her own family and household duties to look after, and these duties were sufficiently heavy without the additional burden of a sick child under her roof. More than all, if the child's sickness should be infectious, or contagious, or catching, as she called it, who could tell what mischief might follow? She thought of her own poor little Catherine (named after the favorite saint of the household, perhaps), who now lay in the cold churchyard : her heart was very tender on this point ; and she trembled for the other little ones yet spared to her.

But this tender memory pleaded earnestly, on the other hand, for the little suffering stranger ; and after a short though severe

struggle in her soul, the farmer's wife gave herself up to the task of nursing the ailing Lilian, and comforting the child's aged relative.

There was no apothecary whose help could be obtained nearer than the neighboring small town; but there was an old woman in the hamlet who was accounted very wise in the mysteries of medicine and charms; and to this wise woman, Mistress Fletcher despatched a messenger. In obedience to the message, Dame Randolph speedily made her appearance.

And now, if I felt so inclined, I might tell my readers of the wonderful remedies which were forthwith prescribed for poor Lilian, — what decoctions of herbs, now almost forgotten, were brewed over the fire; what cataplasms were applied to her aching head; and what a deluge of noisome mixtures was poured into her reluctant mouth. But, as I shall presently have

to tell of Lilian's recovery, it might be supposed that I pin my faith on the medicines of Dame Randolph, which I assuredly do not; and I might be seriously implicated as an accessory before the fact, of inflicting the same so-called remedies on some future little patient. I shall therefore maintain a wise and prudent reserve on this matter.

It is enough for me to say, that, after a long and sore struggle between nature and disease, combined with art, little Lilian slowly recovered, although the fever left her sadly weakened and fallen away; or rather let me say, that God was graciously pleased to restore health to the child. Great were the boastings of Dame Randolph, doubtless, at this happy event; a gladness mainly occasioned not so much by disinterested philanthropy, however, as first by the liberal gift put into her hand by Margaret Butler, who thereby dispelled any remaining suspicion of her own urgent pov-

erty ; and secondly, by the renewed credit obtained by the wise woman's medicaments, which, together with herself, had suffered some diminution of respect since the death of Catherine Fletcher under her hands.

Meanwhile, Margaret Butler had insensibly and gradually gained ground in the confidence of her host and hostess. Although she was generally tending little Lilian in the sick-chamber, — which was but a poor loft, much exposed to the outer elements, because of its numerous chinks and crevices, — there were times when she mixed with the household below while the little patient slept ; and her conversation was of a character so superior to her apparent circumstances, that more reverence was yielded to this “stranger within the gates” than could have been extorted, probably, by others with higher pretensions. And when, after a month of anxious

watching, little Lilian was so far restored as to join the family at times in the hall below, and her grandmother was thus enabled to render some assistance in the various duties devolving on her kind-hearted hostess, the guest evidently laid herself out to repay, as far as was in her power by diligent helpfulness, the generous hospitality which she had experienced.

Would you like to know in what those various duties of a farmer's wife of the sixteenth century consisted? Here they are, written down by an author of that day; and I give them in his own spelling as well as words:—

Besides due attention to the household requirements of her family, "it is a wife's occupation to wynowe all manner of cornes; to make malte; to washe and wrynge; to make heye; shere corne; and in time of nede to helpe her husbande to fylle the muck-wayne or dounge-cart; to

drive the ploughe, to load heye, corne, and such othere. And to go or ride to the market; to set (or sell) butter, chese, mylke, egges, chekyns, capons, hennes, pygges, gese, and all manner of cornes."

I am not sure that Mistress Fletcher practiced all these accomplishments; but I am pretty well convinced in my mind that she excelled in many of them; and thus, having her hands tolerably full of work, she was well pleased to intrust her little ones to the care of so careful and competent a protectress as Margaret Butler proved herself to be, and to the society of the little pale-faced Lilian. And you may see now why it was, that, when Lilian's strength was sufficiently re-established to allow of the journey being resumed, a strong and unexpected opposition was raised to this course by more than one member of Ralph Fletcher's family.

"See now!" said Mistress Fletcher one

evening when Margaret Butler had plainly intimated her desire to be no longer a burden to her generous host and hostess, and had expressed a wish to depart on the morrow; "did ever mortal hear tell of the like? A burden quotha! Would that Saint Catherine would send us many more such burdens, if that be all! Many thanks should she have for them. 'Tis a burden-bearer you mean, Dame Butler."

"Thankful am I if my poor services have in any measure repaid your kindness," rejoined the aged woman, much affected by such an acknowledgment.

"Then wherefore would you leave us?" demanded the farmer's wife. "If your chamber be in fault,—and truly it is a somewhat gousty place for a winter lodging,—it can be amended, I trow. The walls shall be newly clayed, and the bed"—

"Good, my kind and generous hostess,

think not of such matters," said the guest: "that chamber hath been a very Bethel to me and my child; and never shall it be forgotten, whether in joy or sorrow hereafter."

"I know not what you may mean by a Bethel, Dame Butler," returned Mistress Fletcher; "but if, as I do suppose, you would say that the chamber pleases you, and we are not to your disliking, wherefore should you be in such haste to depart?"

"So say I, Mistress Butler," added the farmer.

"And, indeed, I shall take it ill of you to be leaving us at this time," continued the farmer's wife. "See you not, good dame, how I am overdone with too much moil, so that I have scant time to give to things within doors? and now that, though haying is past, harvest is hastening on, and my two hussies must turn a hand with our harvesters in sheaf-binding, think you, good

dame, what a loss mine would be were you to take yourself away, when you have so used the poor brats to your company and Lilian's, that they care for none other; but would be calling out every day for Lily and Lily's grandam?"

"What my dame means," said the farmer, when his wife paused for want of breath, she having spoken so earnestly, "is that you have made yourself of so much use, Dame Butler, that we are loth to part with you. But you know your own business best; and if you must go" —

"But indeed you must not go, grandam," interposed Guy Fletcher, who was standing near to Lilian, and who, presuming on his familiar companionship with her, had already taken to this mode of address. "You were to teach me my letters, you know, and to read out of your Book: you half promised me this, grandam."

"You have given me but scant opportu-

nity for redeeming my promise, dear boy," quoth Margaret Butler.

"How could he, grandam?" pleaded little Lilian, hesitating and blushing as she spoke scarcely above her breath. "Every day Guy is at work in the fields from morning to night; and then sleep overcomes him."

"And I shall have no more time for learning, only on Sundays, till winter comes," added the boy dolefully.

"You see how it is, dame," said the farmer; "it is plain, that, go when you will, you will be both missed and moaned; and it will be a sore trial to us all to part with you and Lilian. But yet, you know your own affairs best. You came, and we scarcely asked you whence. We know not, neither do we seek to know, wherefore you traveled; and as little do we require of you to tell us whither you are bound. It may well be that you will find more power-

ful friends, but I think not warmer hearts, than you will leave behind you if you should depart."

"I am well assured of that," said the guest, with a troubled countenance: "and I know not indeed what welcome may await us in the distance; neither will I speak more of being burdensome, since this is denied by you, my kind hosts. But I wot not what to do, or how to reply. If indeed I thought it were my Master's will that I remain here for a season" —

"Nay, good dame; if thou hast a husband," interposed Ralph Fletcher, quickly and suspiciously, "the case is thereby altered. I thought not of such a thing. Surely we deemed you to be a widow."

"As truly I am," said the guest, "save only that I may say 'my Maker is my husband.' But indeed I thought not of an earthly husband when I spoke of my Master. It was of Christ Jesus my Lord, and of his blessed will, that I spoke."

“Well done; be it so: I know little of these high matters, Saint Catherine be praised; but I say once more, that if it be your pleasure to abide with us for a year, if it so like you, or longer or shorter, as you will, it will be our pleasure also, and it may be in some ways our profit too. But not to speak of profit, it shall be as you list. And be in no hurry to give us an answer, dame; your mind may take time to settle down. Let us speak no more of this till to-morrow.”

The guest was glad of this delay. Her mind needed to settle down, as Master Fletcher had guessed; and she desired to ask counsel of Him who giveth wisdom and direction to those who ask him for them aright. There were reasons which inclined her to accept the invitation so frankly offered; the main one being, that, generous as were the farmer and his wife, they were in great spiritual ignorance, as were also all

the household ; and as she and Lilian had received of them in temporal things, so she desired to impart to them spiritual things ; a desire which she had indeed attempted in some measure to fulfill, though with little apparent success.

Moreover, Margaret Butler was far from certain that the errand on which she was bound on leaving London would prove successful ; and it seemed to her almost as though the Lord had, in his providence, opened another door for herself and her grandchild, which it would be presumption or disobedience to refuse to enter.

So, with these feelings, the guest retired that night to her chamber, and spread her case before God in prayer, asking him to direct her steps. Then she laid herself down beside Lilian, and slept calmly till the morning light. With this she rose ; and, presently opening her Bible, she happened on these words :—

“ And after these thingis the Lord Jhesus ordeyned also other seventi, and sent them by tweyne and tweyne bifore his face into every citee and place whidur he was to come. And he seyde to them, Ther is myche rype corn, and fewe werkemen: therfore preie ye the Lord of the rype corn, that he sende werkemen into his rype corn. Go ye : lo, Y sende you, as lambren among wolvys. Therfore nyle ye bere a sachel, neither scrippe, neither shoon; and grete ye no man by the weye. Into what hous ye entren, first seye ye, Pees to this hous! And if a sone of pees be there, your pees schal reste on hym; but if noon, it shall turne agen to you. And dwelle ye in the same hous, etinge and drynkyng the thingis that ben at hem; for a werkeman is worthi his hire: nyle ye passe fro hous into hous.” *

* The above is from Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament, with the original spelling, Luke x. 1-7. The

“Lilian, my dear child,” said Margaret Butler, closing her book, “we will stay here for a season.”

And Lilian was glad.

young reader may feel interested in comparing this quotation, and others which will occur, with the corresponding passages in their own Testaments of the modern version.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOME MISSIONARY.

HARVEST-TIME passed away; winter also came and passed; and Margaret Butler, with Lilian, were still the guests of Ralph Fletcher. In these weeks and months, Dame Margaret had labored earnestly for the spiritual benefit of all within reach of her influence. And before proceeding with this history, I may say a few words about the state of religion in England at the times of which I am writing.

They were times of great darkness and ignorance. Popery had long been the established faith of the country; and my readers need scarcely be told that popery and

Scripture light and knowledge do not go hand in hand. It is true, King Henry VIII. had quarreled with the pope, and had become what may be called a *queer kind of Protestant*, inasmuch as he had abolished or dissolved many popish monasteries and nunneries through the country, and had permitted the Bible to be read by certain classes of the people of England, and had also made a kind of reformation in the Church: but whether this king was sincere and pure in his motives or not, these were but the beginnings of better times; the ignorance of centuries could not all at once be cleared away. It is true also, that, long before Henry VIII. quarreled with the pope, there were good people in England who were called Lollards, who secretly read the Bible, and loved it, and framed their lives by it; but these were few and despised as well as grievously persecuted, while the great

body of English people were, as I have said, very ignorant indeed of what was most important for them to know. They were superstitious as well, leaving it to their priests to do all that was required for their salvation, and trusting much more to Romish saints, and praying far oftener to them, than to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only true Saviour. And these priests, I am sorry to say, were mostly as ignorant and depraved as the people whom they professed to teach. Indeed, after the Reformation was really commenced, it was much hindered by those who then filled the priest's office. "The benefices were, in many instances, held by persons absent from their cures, sometimes by laymen, while the services in the churches were discharged by ignorant men, most of whom were papists at heart."

This was the state of things in the country during the reign of Edward VI., when

my story begins. And so, though England then began to be called Protestant England, it is not to be wondered at that the greater number of its inhabitants, if they thought at all about the matter, still held to what they called "the old religion." Ralph Fletcher and his wife were among these. Not that they cared much about religion, one way or other; for, as they would have said, and did often say to Margaret Butler, they had no time to spare for these thoughts and things, which were too high for them. No doubt it was all for the best, this change which had come; but the old religion had been good enough for their fathers and mothers before them, and they reckoned it was good enough for them. And in this way they put off all their pious and enlightened guest's attempts to rouse them to reflection about those things which made for their eternal peace and safety. And in this determination they were con-

firmed by their parish minister. Father Jarvest — for so he was called — was an elderly man, who had been a popish priest at the little country church near to Ralph Fletcher's farm before the stir was made about a reformation of religion; and then, to save himself trouble, he had shifted round to Protestantism. It was equally true, that, to save himself further trouble, he was quite as ready to turn round again to popery if it should ever be required of him. Of course such a man as this could have no true principle of religion in his soul; and teacher though he was called, he was in as gross spiritual darkness as the most ignorant and blinded of his flock. Can you be surprised, then, that it happened to his parishioners even according to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"?

You may be sure that Dame Margaret

Butler was grieved by the careless indifference of her kind host and hostess, whom she found to be thus perishing for lack of knowledge, and who seemed to be like the Jews to whom Christ said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." But Margaret was not the woman to give up in despair her attempts to do good. She knew where it is written, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." She thought of these words too : "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Moreover, Dame Butler had strong faith in the promises of God's word, and in the efficacy of prayer ; and you may be sure she prayed very earnestly in secret for those by whom she and her dear little grand-daughter Lilian were so befriended. There was also another

thought which encouraged this *home missionary*, for so we may consider Dame Margaret to have been. This thought was that God himself had directed her steps to that farm-house, and had so ordered events in his providence as to make it her home for a time, and that without any seeking of her own. And she rightly argued that He who always watches over his people had some merciful and wise designs to accomplish by these providential arrangements. What these designs might be she could not judge, nor did she greatly desire to know. But she did know that her own duty was plain, and she did truly desire to perform that duty as in God's own sight.

Meanwhile, and as a part of that duty, she and Lilian also made themselves useful in numberless ways to Mistress Fletcher. They could do but little outdoor work, and this was not expected of them. But the aged woman was not too infirm to under-

take a great part of the household duties of the farm, especially through the busy harvest season, when the farmer's wife and maids were engaged, almost from dawn to dusk, in the fields ; and Lilian was so gay and cheerful and active a playfellow to the little ones, that, as Mistress Fletcher declared, the brats had never given her so little trouble as at that time. Then, as winter came on, and outdoor work, at least for the women, came for that time to an end, Dame Butler's help was invaluable in making up garments for the children — indeed for all the family — from homespun linen and cloth ; and when this was done, she could take distaff in hand, and spin more linen and wool than the best and briskest of them. There was a secret influence in all this usefulness, a secret worth knowing by all. Whatever she did, she did heartily, “as to the Lord, and not unto men,” and “in singleness of heart, as fear-

ing God." Consequently there was no eye-service in any of it.

It happened, too, that in that very winter, or the succeeding spring, an infant was born to her kind hostess ; and after this Margaret Butler became more indispensable than ever ; she nursed Mistress Fletcher so tenderly, and took her place in the family so wisely. While, however, she both earned and received the gratitude of her benefactors for these services, she also made herself a bitter enemy in Dame Randolph, the "wise woman" before mentioned, who found herself cast into the shade by Margaret Butler's superior skill and judgment, and by the great deference paid to it. This was an offense not to be forgiven ; and though the innocent offender strove to appease Dame Randolph's wrath, she left the farm-house in great indignation, and muttering threats of future revenge.

Amidst all her urgent duties of the kind

just mentioned, the aged guest did not forget that which pressed on her thoughts with greater weight than aught beside. And though she made apparently but little way, if any, with the farmer and his wife, she had the happiness of seeing that her labor in the Lord was not in vain, and that the promise was meeting its accomplishment: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. lv. 10, 11.

And here I may tell you that though Ralph Fletcher peremptorily, though good-temperedly, told Dame Margaret that he was in no hurry to change his religion, he

did not oppose her reading the Scriptures to his household, so that she did not hinder their time. So, in the long winter evenings, when a good fire of wooden billets blazed on the hearth, and cast a cheerful light through the hall, and the men, driven from outdoor work, were seated on one side of the great fireplace, employed, perhaps, in repairing farming gear or harness, while the maids on the other side were busy with their distaffs, the pious home missionary would often seat herself at the table with the children around her, and by the flame of a rude lamp would read aloud the words of everlasting life from that sacred volume which was more precious to her than thousands of gold and silver.

And it was reckoned a wonderful accomplishment, this reading. There were comparatively few, especially among country folks, who had attained to so much learning in those days; for though with the Refor-

mation had come in the encouragement of schools and school-teachers, as well as a newly quickened desire for instruction, a long interval had yet to transpire before education of this sort became widely extended: indeed, books were then few, and scarce, and dear, for the art of printing was not far beyond its infancy; and even among the old Romish priests had been many who possessed only their breviaries (or abridged services of the Romish Church), and knew not how to read even these, but repeated the services by rote. We may suppose, therefore, that Dame Butler's reading was listened to with something like wonder as well as with interest, which even the farmer and his wife sometimes shared and expressed.

At other times, Margaret Butler would earnestly set herself to teach those who were willing to learn to read. Among these, Lilian was an apt scholar: indeed,

young as she was, she had some time before surmounted the first difficulties of scholarship, and was already able to read with tolerable fluency before making her appearance at the farm. This proficiency spurred on Guy Fletcher to exertion; and as his mind was quick and active, he made, before the winter was over, considerable progress in book-learning.

The most favorable time for Margaret Butler's Scripture-readings was on Sunday afternoons, when the short service at the parish church had been shuffled through, or "slubbed up," as a writer of that date expresses it, by Father Jarvest, who was generally in too great a hurry to go off to the alehouse, to play at nine-pins or shovel-board with some of his parishioners, to pay much regard to the importance or sense of what he was expected to repeat in the desk. At these times the pious, aged Christian would gather her

little home flock around her in the old farm hall, and read to them some of the touching events in the history of the Saviour, the miracles he wrought, and the parables he spake. And very great was the effect sometimes produced on her hearers; for, strange as it may seem, there were thousands of gray-headed men and women in England then to whom all this would have been entirely and perfectly new.

There was John Middlemas, the old shepherd at this very farm, for instance: it would have done your heart good, surely, had you lived then, and had seen that old man's head bent forward to listen to those life-giving words, while tears often ran down his furrowed cheeks, unheeded by him, as he heard of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. Certainly Margaret Butler rejoiced when she saw

these signs of deep emotion ; for it seemed to her as though her Lord and Master were saying to her, through them, in the words of the Apostle Paul, " Therefore, my dere-worthe britheren, be ghe stidefast, and unmouable, beynge plenteouse in werk of the Lord, euermore witynge that ghoure traueil is not idil in the Lord." *

We may be pretty well assured that these proceedings of Master Fletcher's guest did not pass without the knowledge and comment of people in the hamlet around. Much curiosity was aroused to know who the strangers were, and whence they came ; and some did not scruple to affirm that Ralph Fletcher must have been bewitched when he admitted them within his walls. They shook their heads ominously, therefore, when told how harmless they were in their lives, how useful they were to their hosts, and how superior they

* 1 Cor. xv. 58, Wycliffe's version.

both seemed to the lot upon which they had fallen. It was Dame Randolph who set about the evil report of witchery; fortifying her conclusion with what she remembered to have heard respecting the hasty exclamation of the frightened dairy-maid Kate, on the evening of the weary travelers' arrival at the farm. Dame Randolph also affirmed, that, had it not been for witchcraft, or some supernatural help, the little Lilian must have died of the fever she brought with her; forgetting how much credit she had formerly taken to herself for the dear child's cure.

But a greater and more important enemy to Margaret Butler and her grandchild was found in Father Jarvest, who hated them intensely because they evidently belonged to the Reformed religion, which he hated in his heart, though for filthy lucre he openly professed it after a fashion. The time was not yet come, however, for him to show his enmity openly.

And so winter passed away, and spring, and then summer ; and autumn first, then winter, returned ; and Dame Margaret, with Lilian, yet remained at the old English farm-house.

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD SHEPHERD.

AN event worthy of being recorded happened in the second winter of Margaret and Lilian Butler's sojourn at Ralph Fletcher's farm. Old John Middlemas, the shepherd, was taken ill. He had long been infirm, but now his infirmities so increased, that he was unable to do any more work, but sat all day long in the chimney-corner, until his strength so gave way, that he could no longer leave the garret which served him for a chamber, but lay stretched on his hard straw-pallet, evidently waiting for death to release him from his bodily pains.

Doubtless, every thing that could be

thought of was done for his comfort; Mistress Fletcher being kindly disposed to all who were about her. But it was little that could be done; and as to the old shepherd's recovery, this was pronounced impossible by the doctor who came once or twice from the neighboring town, at Ralph Fletcher's earnest request and cost. John Middlemas himself acquiesced in this decision, saying that he knew his end to be approaching. 7

"Had you not better have Father Jarvest to see you, and make your peace with God, John?" said his mistress to him one day, when she had taken a comfortable cordial to him, and found the old man in much distress of mind.

"And what good can Father Jarvest do me, mistress?" groaned poor Middlemas. "I doubt if he is in the right way himself, let alone putting another into it."

"It is not right to speak so of the clergy, John," replied Bridget Fletcher, sorely

troubled; "if they know not about such things when they are brought up to it, who is to know? Ah," she continued, "they were the comfortable times to poor souls, when the priest had only to come and say a few words to make every thing right at last. And, as to that, Father Jarvest is the man to do it now, — in the good old way, if one has a mind. You had better let me send to him, and whatever there is to pay for his trouble shall be paid; I'll see to that, John Middlemas:" and the good-natured but ignorant woman wiped her eyes, which were moistened with sympathizing and sorrowful tears.

"Nay, mistress," sighed the old shepherd; "I'll have none of Father Jarvest's mummeries; many thanks to you for your goodness, notwithstanding. Dame Butler and her good Book suit me better; and if there could be any hope for such a wicked wretch" —

“How can you talk so, John?” demanded the farmer’s wife. “You have been a good useful man on the farm, and have never done any harm to man, woman, or child; but if any thing is on your mind, to be sure there is not a more likely body than Dame Margaret to give you a spice of comfort, nor one readier to do a good turn. Methinks, however, she has tried her skill already, without making much of the job. Nathless, I will send her to you, John.” Accordingly, Mistress Fletcher departed on her errand.

It was quite true, that, all the time of that old shepherd’s illness, Margaret Butler had been by his side as often as her other duties would permit; and, with the Scriptures in her hand and ever ready on her lips, had, from time to time, directed his thoughts to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” I have already told how, before his illness, John

Middlemas had seemed hopefully impressed and enlightened by Margaret's Scripture-reading; and it was to be expected, that, as the clouds of ignorance and darkness rolled away, he would gladly have embraced the faithful saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And so, indeed, he did in part; and yet, as his knowledge of the things of God increased, a deep gloom settled on his mind, which all the encouragement he received from the pious woman failed to remove. ✓

He was in this desponding state when Dame Margaret, at Mistress Fletcher's request, entered his chamber, and seated herself on a low stool by his pallet.

"You wished to see me, John," said she, taking the old man's nerveless hand in her own, and pressing it affectionately.

The action, slight as it was, seemed to thrill through the dying man's frame,

and to fill him with horror. Terror, at least, was expressed in his looks; while, hastily withdrawing his hand, he lifted it with difficulty, and, smiting it forcibly on the hard floor, so forcibly, notwithstanding his bodily weakness, that when he had twice repeated the blow, it lay quivering, blackened and bruised by his side, he exclaimed, almost passionately, "Don't touch it again, good dame,—that wicked, wicked right hand!"

"What hath that hand done, John Middlemas, that it should offend thee thus, and meet so severe a punishment?" asked Dame Butler, calmly, although she had been at first alarmed by the old man's violence. "And yet," said she, "I ask thee not to tell me, so thou dost confess thy sin, whatever it may have been, to the Blessed One, who evermore liveth to pray for us."

"Nay," said the poor afflicted man, weeping, "have I not confessed the sin again

and again, with no comfort brought to my soul? Surely I can never be forgiven."

"John, hast thou forgotten these words?" and, opening her book, Margaret Butler read as follows: "'If we seien that we hau felawschip with him, and we wandren in derknessis, we lien and doen not treuthe; but if we walken in ligt, as also he is in ligt, we hau felawschip togidre, *and the blood of Jesu Christ his sone clensith us fro al synne.* If we seien that we hau no synne, we disseyuen ussilk, and treuthe is not in us. If we knowlechen oure synnes, he is feithful and just that he forgyve to us oure synnes, and clense us fro al wickidnesse.' " *

John Middlemas's countenance relaxed somewhat of its terrified aspect as Dame Margaret read that blessed passage; but the troubled look remained. "I have thought of those precious words, good dame," said he faintly; "nay, I never cease to think

* Wycliffe's Testament, 1 John i. 6-9.

of them; and surely they have kept me from altogether despairing of the mercy of God. Yet when I bethink me that no man did ever sin so foully as I, through this vile hand,"—and he held up the disfigured member as he spoke,—“I dare not hope for that mercy.”

“But bethink thee again, John Middlemas, of these words of the Apostle Paul: ‘A true word it is, and worthy of all receiving; for Christ Jesu came into this world to make sinful men safe, of which I am the first.’” ✓

“‘The first!’ quoth he?” said the dying man earnestly; “but that man sinned not as I sinned.”

“It may be so,” said the other; “but even then there is a word for thee, John; and a glorious word: The Lord Jesus *saveth without end*. Think thee of this; and also, when thou sayest that the apostle sinned not like thee, thou forgettest how vilely he

sinned. Hear you what he himself says ;” and once more did Margaret Butler turn over the pages of her book, till she lighted on these words: “‘I do thankyngis to him that coumfortide me in Christ Jesu oure Lord, for he gesside me feithful and putte me in mynestirie, that first was a blasfeme and a pursuere and ful of wrongis; but I have getin the merci of God for I unknownge dide in unbileeve.’”^{*} And whatever thou didst in ignorance shall likewise be forgiven thee,” continued the pious woman; “so thou dost heartily repent of the same, and wash thee in the most precious fount of Christ’s blood.”

“‘A blasfeme, and a pursuere, and ful of wrongis!’ Be ye sure that be written there, dame?” said John Middlemas eagerly.

“It be all here, word for word,” replied

^{*} Wycliffe’s Testament, 1 Tim. i. 12, 13.

Margaret solemnly, laying her hand on the book as she spoke.

“Then there may be hope for me, though I be foremost of the first,” rejoined the poor penitent. “Yet must I speak my great sin. Wilt thou hear it, good dame?”

“If it will ease thy mind to speak it,” replied Margaret Butler; “but I am a poor sinful worm also, and can but tell thee again what thou already knowest,—that, if we confess our sins to the Lord Jesus, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

“Thou wilt hate me if I speak; yet must I speak: there is that within me which has said within my ears these many days, ‘Tell of thy great sin to Dame Margaret; tell of thy great sin to Dame Margaret; then shalt thou have comfort.’ Yet,” added he mournfully, “thou wilt loathe me hereafter.”

“Nay,” said Margaret, “I will not loathe thee; I will but pray for thee the more

earnestly. And if the Lord hath bidden thee speak, even speak."

Thus encouraged, the old shepherd laid his hand (not his offending hand) for one moment on his brow, also covering his eyes therewith, as though to concentrate his thoughts; and then he thus began:—

"I dwelt not always in this place; I was born far away, in another shire. It chanced one day, when I was but a lusty young man, that I had a call to a great town not very far from my home. It was on a market-day: but methought there was a greater stir than common; and when I asked the reason why, I was told that there was to be a Lollard-burning that afternoon in the market-place."

A deep sigh here from Dame Margaret interrupted the speaker. It was checked as soon as uttered, however; and with a composed voice she said, "I ask thee not

the name of the town ; but how long since did this happen to thee ? ”

“ I count not time like a clerk,” said the man ; “ but surely fifty years have passed since that day.”

“ Even so long ? ” remarked Margaret Butler in a tone of suppressed emotion. And then she added, “ Proceed with thy story, my friend.”

“ I determined to stay and see the burning,” continued the old shepherd, “ and waited many hours. In that time I saw the stake driven into the ground ; and presently came the wain laden with fagot-wood for the fire. I perceived then, that, though there was a great crowd thereabout, there were none ready to lend a hand to the man who brought the fagots : for it did appear that the Lollard, who had been doomed to die, was a worshipful man of high esteem in the town ; and though none might save him from death, none were willing to help

it on. At that moment a hand was laid on my shoulder, and, looking round, I saw a burly monk in his black gown, and bare-foot, who cried out, 'Here is an honest countryman, who will do God service to-day, and secure a place in paradise when he dies.' And then he bade me pile the fagots round the stake, promising me a groat for my pains, and as much drink as I liked when the work was done."

"And thou didst it?" ejaculated Margaret Butler in a piteous voice. "But I need not ask thee," she added sorrowfully; "for I see it written on thy face that thou didst it. Go on, John Middlemas."

"I did it, dame," continued the penitent; "and would God that were all. I sinned yet more grievously than this."

"Poor ignorant wretch! thou didst afterwards set fire to the pile," said Margaret Butler, striving to subdue some rising feeling: "say that thou didst this, John; yet

is there place for repentance. Did not the holy apostle Paul, while yet he was Saul the persecutor, help in the slaying of the blessed martyr Stephen? Bethink thee of this, John, and despair not of infinite mercy."

"My sin was even greater," groaned the old shepherd. "Said I not that thou wouldst hate me? Yet tell thee I must."

"Simple man! *here* I will not hate thee," said Margaret; "I will pray for thee." Yet, though she spoke cheerfully as it were, had the bed-ridden man looked up into her countenance at that moment he would have seen a great change thereupon, even as though she had caught the infection of his own overpowering terror and horror of soul. Nevertheless, at the whispered prayer of faith which she then silently sent up, strength was given; and she but added, "Say quickly what else befell thee on that day."

“Having piled the fagots even as I was directed,” continued the penitent, “I waited to see what should follow, ever keeping near to the monk lest he should forget to pay me the groat I had earned; he also encouraging me to stay by him, that I might have a good sight of the burning of a heretic. And so it came to pass that about dusk the officers came with their staves, and others bearing torches, while in their midst was the man who was to be chained to the stake. I stood by while this was a-doing; and I heard the monk at my side offering the heretic mercy if he would recant, as he said, which the other did steadily refuse. And then, when all was ready, and thousands were pressing around to witness the pitiful sight, came a loud shriek to my ears; and in another moment a young damsel had pierced through the throng, crying piteously, either that mercy might be shown to her father, or that she

might be consumed with him in the same flames. And thereupon she was hardly held back from casting herself on the dry wood not yet lighted."

While the dying man was thus painfully laboring with his failing breath to describe the scene of which he had been a witness, his auditor had sunk on her knees by his pallet bed, and had hidden her countenance in her kerchief; yet did she seem convulsed with heavy sobs, which from time to time she endeavored to stifle, though with but small success. But now she raised her head; and her face, though pale, was wonderfully calm, while she laid her hand on the bruised and swollen member of the aged confessor, and said,—

"Let me tell thee the rest, John Middlemas. At a word from that monk, thou didst snatch a blazing torch from the nearest officer, and didst thrust it into that damsel's hand; and then, dragging her

forward to the martyr's pile, thou didst, with this hand of thine, and by thy great strength, compel her to set fire to that pile. Was it not so?"

"Ha! thou hast heard of the foul deed, then, Dame Butler," said the penitent with a deep groan. "It was even as thou sayest, though with more circumstances of cruelty."

"It needs not to mention them, old man: I know them all. I also was there."

"Thou, Dame Margaret? thou?"

"Let me prove further to thee that I was there," continued the aged woman, still holding the hand of the penitent. "Having caused that damsel to set fire to the wood which encompassed her doomed father, thou didst snatch from her the blazing torch, and with this hand thou didst dash it against her bosom, saying it were well she had a taste of her father's punishment."

“It is but too true,” sobbed the dying man; “though how thou shouldst, now so many, many years having passed, bring it to my mind, I dare not guess.”

“Said I not I was there, John Middlemas? And surely by this token may I not well remember all which I have told?” and, baring her neck, she laid open the broad red scar of a burn long healed. Then, bending down over the stricken man, she whispered, “Be of good cheer. The Lord Jesus forgiveth all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his gospel. He forgiveth thee, even as I do this day, only yet more freely and fully; for he remembereth thine iniquity no more.”

CHAPTER VI.

A RETROSPECT, AND A CONSULTATION.

JUDGED by ordinary rules, the life of Lilian's grandmother had been a sorrowful life; nor had Lilian herself, child as she was, been exempt from great trials; and having, in the previous chapter, revealed one sad scene in the aged woman's earlier history, I may now, in a few words, trace down both her story and that of Lilian to the time of their becoming Ralph Fletcher's guests.

Having been compelled to take a fearfully cruel part in her father's martyrdom, Margaret was borne away insensible from the blazing fire, and conveyed to her desolate home. Shortly afterwards, with her

widowed mother, she removed to London, where in time her wounded bosom healed, though the ghastly scar remained, to become, as we have seen, a witness against her furious persecutor fifty years after the fiery blow was inflicted.

Time also assuaged the grief of her soul. It was no very strange thing which had befallen her dear father. In those days of dark malignity, the true followers of Christ knew the penalty which ever hung over them; that bonds and imprisonment constantly awaited them, and that a violent death might probably be the termination of a stormy life. But none of these things moved them, neither did they count their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and testify in and by their death the gospel of the grace of God. They could truly adopt the language of the Apostle Paul as their own: "We are troubled on every side, yet not

distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So, then, death worketh in us."*

Margaret knew this; and though she grieved with natural grief that her father had borne the martyr's cross on earth, she joyed with spiritual joy that he was thenceforth and for ever wearing a victor's crown in heaven.

It was a terrible recollection, truly, that she herself had been dragged forward to kindle the fire which was commissioned to destroy her father's perishable body; but feeling assured that that same fire had

* 2 Cor. iv. 8-12.

wafted his redeemed and glorified and happy soul to heaven and the immediate presence of God, even *that* recollection could scarcely be said to torture her. The act, indeed, was not hers, but her father's persecutors'. Nevertheless, the remembrance lived; and its effect was to fasten on her mind a greater love than ever for the principles for which her father had suffered, and a stronger hatred to spiritual tyranny.

After the lapse of a few years, and when her mother was dead, Margaret became the wife of one, who, like herself, loved the Scriptures, and was ready to lay down his life, if this should be required of him, in defence of the truth. But Mistress Butler was spared this trial. Her husband was, indeed, always in danger, and often threatened; but he was exempted from martyrdom by an early death from disease, leaving behind him his mourning

widow and an only child, — a boy, afterwards Lilian's father.

Ardent Butler (for this was the boy's name) was brought up in the faith for which his grandfather had suffered at the stake, and his father had risked property, liberty, and life itself. He learned to read the Scriptures at his mother's knee; was made, like Timothy, "wise unto salvation" by them, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" and grew up to be a LOLLARD, using the ordinary term of reproach, but which, indeed, was considered a title of honor by those to whom it was applied.

Of course, though religion was looked upon by the Lollards as the chief business of life, it was no more then, than it is now, the *only* duty. That is to say, the ordinary business of life, the "providing things honest in the sight of all men," had to be attended to; and Ardent Butler accordingly entered into business, and prospered.

In course of time, he also married; and, as I have said, Lilian was his daughter.

This was a comparatively tranquil time in the history of Margaret Butler, who had taken up her abode with her son. In addition to the worldly comforts by which she and hers were surrounded, there was hope that the Church of God would have some rest from persecution, seeing that the king (Henry VIII.) had commenced the work of reformation, and had given limited permission to the people of England to read the Bible. But it was soon seen how unfounded were these expectations. The king had, indeed, disowned and abolished for a time the pope's authority in matters of religion; but it was to set up a spiritual tyranny of his own; and, as it has been very truly said, "he equally persecuted to death the Roman Catholics who denied his supremacy, and the Protestants who

did not admit most of the errors of the Romish faith. With singular inconsistency, he sent the persecutors and their victims to the place of execution, drawn together in the same sledge." In other words, he hated and persecuted the Protestants, or Lollards, as Protestants were still called, for going too far according to his notions, and the Papists for not going far enough.

And thus it came to pass that Ardent Butler was one day torn from his family and sent to prison, and from prison was taken before his judges, who sentenced him to be burned as a heretic for some words he had spoken against the Romish doctrine of the mass. This was when the little Lilian was about three or four years old; and one of the earliest scenes in her remembrance was that in which she was one dark night carried in her mother's arms, and with her grandmother by her

side, to a dreary dungeon, to take leave of her condemned father, who was to be executed on the following day.

After this came a sad and sorrowful season, of which Lilian remembered only that her poor mother gradually sunk under the weight of her great affliction, and, dying, left the orphan child to the grandmother's love and care. Gradually, also, poverty came upon them; for, with Ardent Butler's death, worldly prosperity had vanished away. It was in this sore strait that Margaret Butler bethought her of a brother of Lilian's mother, one Master Edward Lisle, a gentleman of some wealth, far away in the north of England, who had been grievously offended that his sister had married a London citizen. And though it was but a slender hope to build upon, and an arduous undertaking besides, she determined to travel northward and seek out this relative, praying that God

would incline his heart to adopt his poor orphan niece. Converting what little property remained into money, therefore, and equipping herself as becomingly as she might, yet so unpretendingly as to attract no especial attention or suspicion on the road, and not forgetting to take with her the precious Bible which was an heirloom in her family, she and Lilian set out on their long and toilsome and withal uncertain journey.

We have seen how far they had advanced on the road when the illness of the delicate child stayed their progress; and I have explained the reasons which influenced Margaret Butler in her decision to remain for a time at Ralph Fletcher's farm. I now take up my story, therefore, at the point where it seemed desirable to introduce the foregoing needful explanations.

The awe-struck wonder and increased compunction of the old shepherd, Middle-

mas, when he found, in his aged spiritual instructress, the young woman whom he had, fifty years before, treated with such aggravated cruelty, may be easily imagined; and it needed all the earnest eloquence of Margaret Butler to soothe his perturbed spirit. But ere that interview was ended, comfort and peace, to which he had theretofore been a stranger, were poured into the dying man's soul. For, assured of the full forgiveness of the fellow-creature against whom he had so barbarously sinned, he could the more firmly and unwaveringly lay hold on the assurance of divine love and mercy. From that day, therefore, his distress of mind was removed; and during his few remaining days he received with joyful avidity the scriptural instruction which Dame Margaret was so well able to impart; clinging with eager and determined ardor to that "true word, and worthy all receiving, that

Christ Jesus came into this world to make sinful man safe," "of which," said he, as he pressed Dame Margaret's hand with a dying grasp, "of which I am the foremost of the first; for I too was a blasphemer, a pursuer, and full of wrongs." And so John Middlemas died.

From that time a twofold change was observed in Dame Margaret Butler by those around. It seemed, first, as though her spirits had been wondrously cheered, so that she could scarcely retain her joy. And surely she had cause for gladness. She saw now, as she believed, the reason why she had, in God's providence, been directed to Ralph Fletcher's farm; and recognized in the conversion of her former persecutor the exceeding riches of divine grace, as well as the answer to many fervent prayers which she had offered on his behalf while he was yet undiscovered by her.

The other change noticed in Margaret Butler was that her bodily powers rapidly began to fail. It was as though her outward frame were perishing in proportion as her inward strength was renewed and increased day by day. She herself was the last to perceive this alteration; but at length she could no longer refuse to acknowledge that her breath was becoming more scant and labored, and that she sooner tired in her constant active labor than had been her wont.

“Lilian,” said she one day, when she and her grandchild were by themselves, “it seemeth as though a voice were sounding in my ears, saying, ‘Arise ye, and take your departure; for this is not your resting-place.’”

“What mean you, grandam?” said Lilian.

“That our journey northward must be no longer delayed, if that haven be to be reached.”

“Grandam,” said the child, alarmed by the solemn tone in which these words were spoken, as also by the announcement itself; “bethink thee of this wintry weather,” — it was then March, but the season was inclement, — “and think also that thy strength is sadly failed. How wilt thou endure such long and toilsome travel?”

“That my strength is failing, my beloved one, is but a reason why we should no longer delay. But I thought not of departure in so much haste as though it were to-morrow. Surely as the springtime comes on, I may have recovered some strength; and I now speak only to warn thee that the time is at hand.”

“Needs it that we leave this kindly home at all, grandam?” asked Lilian mournfully. “Thou hast often said that our good Lord directed thee hither.”

“And did he not, Lilian?” rejoined the aged woman triumphantly. “Is not the

redemption of one soul most precious? And was not the gracious Spirit pleased, by my weak means, to bring home that erring sheep, John Middlemas, to the fold of the blessed Lord Jesus?"

"And are there not other sheep still left in the wilderness, grandam?" demanded Lilian, with tears in her eyes.

"Truly there are, my dear child; and my heart yearns for them also. But as yet it seemeth that their hearts are closed against the loving Shepherd's call, though to us they have been ever kind. May the good Lord remember them for good! And truly may we not hope that the good seed will hereafter spring up in their souls, even though the weak sower be removed out of their sight; and that hereafter the great King shall say to them, 'Come, ye the blessed of my Father, take ye in possession the kingdom made ready to you from the making of the world. For I hungered, and

ye gave me to eat ; I thirsted, and ye gave me to drink ; I was herbarweles,* and ye herboriden† me ; for as long as ye did it to one of these my least brethren, ye did it to me.’” Margaret’s voice softened much, and tears ran down her withered cheeks, as she quoted these words, and remembered with gratitude the kindness she had received from the farmer and his wife.

Lilian was affected also ; and she was encouraged to urge her plea. “Nay, grandam,” she said ; “it may be that our dear Lord hath more work for thee to do here yet a while. And though Master and Mistress Fletcher seem to care little for the blessed evangile, I am sure that Guy listens to every word of it, and methinks he feeds upon it in his soul. And if we go away, and take with us the Holy Scriptures, how can he be saved and led into the right way ? I trow he must be lost then,” said Lilian

* Harborless.

† Harbored.



LILIAN AND HER GRANDMOTHER.



in deep distress. Her grandmother was moved by this appeal.

"Truly," said she, "Guy Fletcher is a gracious lad; and I have good hope at times that the Lord hath begun a good work in him. If it be so, Lilian, bethink you that none shall hinder it. The good Shepherd knoweth his sheep, Lilian, and it behooveth him to bring them together; and his sheep shall hear his voice."

"How shall that be if the Holy Scriptures, which thou often hast told me are his voice, be taken away?" demanded the child.

"The Scriptures be one voice, Lilian," said the aged Christian; "but think you that the Lord hath no other voice for calling home his own? Remember, Lilian, what the blessed Saviour said to Nicodemus;" and hereupon she opened her precious volume, and read,—"'The Spirit brethith where he wole, and thou herist his

vois, but thou woost not from whennes he cometh, ne whidur he goith: so is ech man thot is borun of the Spirit.' * Nevertheless, Lilian, we will do naught hastily; and if it be the will of God that we abide longer here, he will doubtless show it to us, if we ask wisdom of him, remembering what the holy Apostle James telleth us, — that he giveth largely, and upbraideth not."

Lilian was something comforted by this promised respite; but yet her heart was heavy and full. She remembered the former journey with a dread of its renewal, although she was older and stronger now than then. But, above all, she had a loving heart, and she felt knit in affection to all around her. Moreover, she could but fear disappointment in the end. It is true, she knew but little of her grandmother's plans; and of their own ultimate destination she was as much in the dark as when they left

* John iii. 8, Wycliffe's version.

London nearly two years before. She knew only that they were seeking the home of her uncle, who lived near to the city of Chester, though her grandmother knew not precisely where. And as that uncle had formerly behaved unkindly to her mother, Lilian — whom circumstances had made thoughtful and quick-witted beyond her years — was very little sanguine as to the result of the bold experiment on his dormant family affection which her aged relative had projected.

It is not necessary to write down any more of the conversation which ensued, and which ended without any further result than that Margaret Butler and her granddaughter should very earnestly seek divine guidance, and watch as well as pray for further indications of their heavenly Father's will.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOUNG EVANGELIST.

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FROM what I have written of Lilian Butler, it will be gathered that there was much promise in her childhood. I may say more than this: there were evident fruits of early piety to be seen in her daily walk and conversation. It is true, Lilian was scarcely more than ten years old at the time to which my story has now reached. But can not a child of ten years old love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Can not a child of eight years old do this? Can not a child of six, or five, or four? My dear young readers, be assured that the youngest may love Jesus.

To be sure, we do not expect *ripe* fruit

in early spring. There is to be first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. And no wise man or woman would look for the ripe experience of aged Christians in young Christians; and we are sure that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Eternal Wisdom, does not. But the religion of a child — of a very young child too — may be as genuine as the religion of an old disciple; yes, and as pleasing in the sight of God, and of that Good Shepherd of his sheep who is represented as “carrying the *lambs* in his bosom.”

Well, Lilian was a dear little lamb of the Lord Jesus Christ. She had heard his voice, and she followed him. I shall have in this and other chapters of my history to write more about her than I have hitherto written; and I will begin by saying that the circumstances of her early life, and the troublous character of the times in which she lived, had tended to

ripen very quickly the seeds of early piety in her soul, and to bring her religion to more maturity than is to be expected, or than would indeed be natural or even desirable, under ordinary circumstances. She was being prepared for early conflict, and therefore she was early strengthened and armed.

After the conversation between Lilian and her grandmother which has been recorded, little more was said about the resumption of the long and painful journey to Chester. But it was never absent from Lilian's mind that she might soon have to part from her friends at the farm; and this feeling produced in her a natural solicitude to do all she could for them while she remained among them. She had always been a gentle nurse and pleasant companion to Mistress Fletcher's younger children; but now she gradually advanced into the character of a teacher as well.

She talked to them very often about the Lord Jesus Christ, her mind and memory being well stored with his history. She had a deep reason for this, independently of the theme being one that she loved. She thought to herself, that when she and her grandmother were gone, and had taken away the written Bible with them, there would be no present hope of these children hearing more of the pure gospel, though they might be in the way of hearing a great many monkish fables about very questionable saints, which fables Lilian rightly believed would do them more harm than good. She therefore determined that their thoughts should have something better to dwell upon, and she secretly prayed that God would impress his own truth on their young souls while yet the light of the gospel remained with them.

With Guy Fletcher, whom she had learned to look upon and to treat familiarly

as a brother, Lilian was more communicative, and, if possible, more earnest. To be sure, Guy was two or three years older than herself, and was a tall, stout youth of his age also. But in all matters relating to learning he looked upon Lilian as being every way his superior: so there was nothing strange in the simple earnestness with which she strove to teach him all that she herself knew. She also confidentially told him — over and over again, at his earnest request — as much as had reached her own knowledge respecting the martyrdom of her father and her great-grandfather. It is to be noted here, however, that Margaret Butler had kept secret, even from Lilian, the close connection there was between herself and the departed John Middlemas in relation to this latter event. This was safely locked up in her own heart.

I have already said that Guy Fletcher

was a spirited boy, full of fun and frolic; but he had also a generous disposition, and the story of those cruel deeds, as he received it from Lilian, filled him with indignation.

“If that be what the old religion, which Father Jarvest talks about when he can do it on the sly, did to people who had done no worse thing than read the Scriptures and pray to God, I’ll never have any thing to do with it, Lilian,” said he.

“Truly, I hope you will not, Guy,” rejoined Lilian; “for that can not be the true and clean religion which doth such things, can it, Guy? Stay: I will read you what the Holy Bible says on this matter,” she added, as she reached down from a shelf the sacred volume, to which she had constant access. “Listen, Guy,” she went on; and then, with Guy looking over her shoulder, following with his eyes the slender finger which traced the words, she read, — “ ‘A

cleen religioun and an unwemmyd anentis God and the Fadir is this: to visite fadirles and modirles children and widowis in her tribulacioun, and to keepe himsilff undefouled fro this world.'*

"And list again, Guy," continued the young teacher, turning over a page, and then resuming her reading,—"Who is wys and taugt among you, schewe he of good lyvyng his worching in myldernesse of hise wisdom. That if ye hau bittir envie and stryvyngis ben in youre hertis, nyle ye have glorie and be liers agens the treuthe. For this wisdom is not fro above comynge doun, but ertheli and beestli and feendli. For where is envie and stryf, there is unstidefastnesse and al schrewid werk. But wisdom that is fro above, first it is chaast, aftirward pesible, mylde, able to be counselid, consentinge to good thingis, ful of merci and of goode fruytis, demynge with-

* Wycliffe's version of James i. 27.

oute feynyng, and the fruyt of rigtwisnesse is sowun in pees to men that maken pees.' " *

"Lilian, I wish I could read like you," said Guy admiringly.

"You may do that soon, Guy," replied Lilian; "nay, even now you are quite book-learned."

"And where will be the use of my being book-learned when you are gone, Lilian?" asked Guy despondingly, — the secret having been imparted to him that his father's guests might soon take their departure. "Grandam will take this good book away with her, and you know well enough that there is not another in the whole house. Oh, but Lilian," quoth he, breaking off abruptly, as though a sudden thought had struck him, "what a gowk am I! Have I not a printed book in my pocket, which I bought a cheap penny at the market but

* James iii. 13-18, Wycliffe's version.

yesterday for you, my pretty Lilian, if you will have it?" And thereupon the boy drew forth a small sheet of three or four printed pages. "It will do you good to read it," said Guy, laughing; "for I heard the man singing it in the streets, and it is all about the pope and the religion of Rome which have done you such foul wrong, Lilian."

Lilian took the little book in her hand, and began reading it: but Guy soon interrupted her by saying, "Nay, Lilian, you read it not like the man in the market-place. I will show you how it should be spoken;" and forthwith he read or recited, with much gesticulation, as follows:—

'With hunts up, with hunts up,
It is now perfect day:
Our king is gone a-hunting;
Who likes to speed, they may.

An cursed fox, lay hid in rocks
This long and many a day,
Devouring sheep, while he might creep,
None might him shape away.

It did him good to lap the blood
Of young and tender lambs :
None could him miss ; for all was his,
The young ones with their dams.

The hunter's Christ, that hunts in haste ;
The hounds are Peter and Paul ;
The pope is the fox ; Rome is the rocks
That rubs us on the gall.

That cruel beast, he never ceast,
By his usurpèd power,
Under dispense, to get our pence,
Our soulis to devour.

Who could devise such merchandise
As he had there to sell ?
Unless it were proud Lucifer,
The master great of hell.

He had to sell the "Tantonie bell,"
And pardons therein was ;
Remission of sins, in old sheep-skins,
Our souls to bring to grace.

With bulls of lead, white wax and red,
And other whiles in green,
Closed in a box, — this used the fox ;
Such poultry was never seen.*

* This song was very popular about three hundred years ago, and gave great offense to the papists of that day.

"I know not what it all means though, Lilian," said Guy, when he had finished reading; "but how like you it?"

"I like it not much, Guy," replied Lilian thoughtfully: "it seemeth too like a jest."

"See now!" exclaimed the boy in a tone of disappointment: "I thought it would please you, and that you would keep it for my sake, to help you to think of me when you are far away, if go you must."

"Oh, Guy," said Lilian earnestly, "I shall need nothing to make me think of you. Think you I shall ever forget you? But, indeed, I will keep this printed song for your sake: only I would I had something to give you in return. But we are not gone yet," she added more cheerfully; "and it may be that my grandmother will stay a while longer." And so the conversation ended.

There were others to whom Lilian desired to do good while yet she remained at the farm; as to whom, indeed, did she not? There were the two maid-servants, with whom she oftentimes conversed, as opportunity offered. Also there were poor women in the hamlet whom she sometimes visited, and to whom she read the Bible, which her grandmother permitted her to take in her hand, the more readily that Margaret Butler could seldom forsake the heavy duties she had imposed upon herself at the farm. Among those whom she sought thus to benefit was Dame Randolph, the "wise woman," who had ere now professed to be reconciled to the *foreigners*, as she called Margaret Butler and Lilian. This indeed was only pretense; but Lilian was pleased that the dame's anger was passed away, as she believed, and talked freely to her about many things. Lilian little knew that Mistress Randolph

was storing up these sayings of hers in her memory, nor that, from time to time, she reported them to Father Jarvest as being rank heresy. But as such heresy was not punishable then, these two could only gnash their teeth malignantly and in secret, like the giants Pope and Pagan which John Bunyan afterwards wrote about in his "Pilgrim's Progress." Alas! it soon proved that the giant *Persecution* was not helpless, as was hoped, but was biding his time, to be fiercer and more cruel than ever.

I need not say that both Dame Margaret and Lilian would have rejoiced greatly at this time could they have seen or hoped that the good-natured farmer and his wife were anyway enlightened by God's holy Word. But it seemed to them as though the good word of Christ's blessed gospel was to them as seed sown in stony ground, so that the business of the world and the

fallacy of riches strangled it, and made it without fruit.*

Notwithstanding this, however, Master and Mistress Fletcher were as strongly as ever set against losing their helpful guests; the farmer declaring that never had he prospered so as since they had sojourned under his roof.

* Matt. xiii. 22, Wycliff's version

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH OF MARGARET BUTLER.

ONE night, the inmates of the farmhouse retired to rest as usual; but, when morning came, one of their number was dead. It was Margaret Butler.

On awaking at dawn of day, Lilian stretched out her hand to feel for that of her aged grandmother, and then suddenly drew it back in terror. The hand she clasped in loving fondness was stiff and clay-cold.

Alarmed by Lilian's outcry, all the members of the family were soon astir; and, ere long, they were standing, awe-stricken, around the poor couch of the departed Christian. Her death-pale countenance

was very peaceful in its expression; a pleasant smile still seemed to play on the closed lips; and it was conjectured that the spirit of Margaret Butler had quietly passed away, without bodily pain, as she slept. All sorrowed for the loss they had thus sustained; but, above all, poor Lilian suffered in mind sadly. She sobbed aloud as she knelt by her dead grandam's side; and it was with difficulty that she could be persuaded to leave the chamber.

All, in various ways, tried to comfort her. The young children clung around her, and offered her their choicest treasures for her "very own," if she would only cease to weep; while the farmer and his wife spoke soothingly and very sensibly about the sad event being such as might have been expected, considering the age and infirmities of the deceased. They also reminded Lilian of the piety of her grandmother, as giving assurance that she was

gone to a better world : for though, as we have seen, neither Ralph Fletcher nor his wife had given much heed to the endeavors of Margaret Butler to rouse them to reflection while she was with them, they had knowledge enough to perceive that hers had been a right course as regarded eternity ; and their feeling (though they did not express it in those precise words) was, " Let us die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like hers."

You may be sure that Guy Fletcher was not behind others in offering consolation to the bereaved Lilian ; and he offered it in the most effectual way that could have been devised.

" Where be poor Lilian, mother ?" said he, as he came in at noon to the mid-day meal.

" She was here e'en now," said the mother, looking round. " Poor wench, she greets sadly ; and methinks, as she be not

here, — though I missed her not in the moil, — that she be gone to the room above, where her grandmother lies shrouded.”

“There will I go also,” said the boy; “for I have no stomach for food to-day;” and, reaching Margaret Butler’s precious volume from its shelf, he proceeded to the chamber of death, where he found the dear child, seated upon the floor, moaning as though her heart would burst with grief.

“Lily, I have brought you the good Book,” said he gently.

Lilian looked up; but she did not speak. Nevertheless, Guy seated himself by her side, and spread the Bible open on her knee. “Read, dear Lilian,” he whispered: “it will do you good, you know.”

“Will you not read to me, Guy?” said poor Lilian in a broken, troubled voice. “But it may be that you care not to be so near the dead,” she added directly.

“I fear not the dead, so you are by me,”

said Guy; and he took the Book in his hands. It may be it was accidental that the place at which the Bible opened was that very part which Margaret Butler had read aloud to Lilian as they sat together under the hedge on the last day of their wanderings, of which I have spoken at the beginning of our history.

“I think this will be good for you, Lilian,” said the young consoler; and he read through the fourteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel. At first, Lilian’s tears flowed very freely; but when, at last, the reader came to these words, “If ye love me, forsooth ye should have joy, for I go to the Father,” the little mourner’s countenance brightened into a quiet smile, for it seemed as though her dead grandam was whispering these very words in her ear.

“Thanks, dear Guy,” said she when the chapter was ended; “you have indeed done

me good;" and from that time her countenance was no more sad.

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Four or five days passed away, and Lilian was alone in the world; at least, no earthly relative was near. Her grandmother had been taken to the village graveyard, and Father Jarvest had read the funeral service over her; but he had spoken no word of comfort to the mourning child. She needed these not from him, however; for God her Saviour comforted her.

It was the day after the funeral, and Ralph Fletcher called Lilian to him as he sat with his wife by their fireside in the kitchen.

"Lilian," said he, taking her hand in one of his own, and stroking down her flaxen hair with the other fondly, "thou art but a child; but thou art wise and staid far above thy years, and we would

take counsel with thee. Dost thou desire to leave us?"

The child gazed earnestly into the face of her questioner, her eyes fast filling with tears; then she looked round at Dame Fletcher, and tried to speak; but she could not, for strong emotion: but in another moment her arms were thrown around that kind woman's neck, and her face was hidden in her bosom.

"See," said the farmer's wife, "there be no need to ask that question again;" and she drew the agitated girl yet closer to her.

"They tell me that thou art a young heretic," continued the farmer, not heeding his wife's words, or not appearing to heed; "and that it will be worse for me if I harbor thee in my home."

"Then will I go forth, Master Fletcher," said Lilian, raising her head from its rest-

ing-place, and speaking calmly ; “ I will go forth, for I would not do thee harm.”

“ Nay,” said he ; “ think not that I mind such clacks, child, — the less that if your way of religion be heresy, which I know not whether it be or no, there is no law against such heresy now, nor against reading the Scriptures either, for all Father Jarvest may say about its being hurtful. But, Lilian,” continued he, “ it can not be concealed that thou art more gently bred and nurtured than any thou seest around thee ; and canst thou still be content with our homely ways ? ”

“ So long as I be not burdensome, I would seek no other home,” replied the child.

“ Burdensome, quotha ! Methought that was to be an unspoken and unremembered word, my pretty one,” cried Dame Fletcher, once more drawing Lilian close to her in much affection. “ And, Ralph,” added she,

“what need be there to question the child thus?”

And, in truth, there was but little need to ask these questions: for, first, it could be plainly seen that Lilian's gentle heart clung to those around her in strong affection; and, next, had she ever so much desired to quit the hospitable farm-house, no other home would have opened to her; for, setting aside the consideration that the child could by no means take the long, wearisome journey alone which her grandmother had ever in her thoughts, it proved, on further examination, that Lilian had no certain information respecting her uncle's residence, and no knowledge of any facts which would warrant her in casting herself on his bounty.

“And right glad are we all that we shall not lose thee, Lilian,” said Ralph Fletcher, when the conference had proceeded thus far; “for we should have

missed thee sorely: so cheer up, pretty one, and think only that thou art as dear to us as our own flesh and blood, though it was our bounden duty to see our way clear to keeping thee with us now that thy grandam is gone. Yet is there one thing more. Dost thou know that thou hast wealth, my queen?"

"Nay, I have no wealth," said Lilian.

"What call you this, then?" said the farmer, opening a small purse, and pouring out into his hand a little heap of silver coins, mostly pennies and groats, with a few shillings: there was also one broad piece of gold. "Be not this wealth?" said he.

"But it is none of mine," said Lilian wonderingly.

"Nay, but it is thine, Lilian. It was thy grandam's, and it is thine now," said Dame Fletcher.

"Listen, child," exclaimed the farmer:

“it is now some years since thy grandam and thyself did house with us ; and when some time had passed, and she yet saw good to remain here at our earnest request, she placed this purse in my hands, saying that what it held might be useful to me for a season, while to her it was but a dead weight. Only she desired me to be a faithful steward of it for thee, Lilian, if it should please God to remove her from this world, even as he hath done. I needed not these moneys, Lilian ; and, had I wanted, I know not that I would have used it : but, not wishing to seem to slight thy grandam’s trust in my honesty, I consented to take charge of the purse and all it contained. And now, Lilian, I give it back to thee, unmeddled with.”

But Lilian would not receive it. First, she said that Ralph Fletcher ought to consider it as his own, to repay him for charges

he had been at in all the time she and her grandmother had lived at the farm; and when the generous farmer would not listen to this argument, she implored him still to keep it for her until she might need it.

“It may be that I can do better than that with it,” said Master Fletcher; “for I have been thinking that this money need not lie idle. With thy consent, Lilian, I will give thee three ewes from my flock for some part of thine inheritance, and I will mark them with a broad cross. They shall feed with my flock, and their increase shall be thine; so that, when thou art of age to marry, — nay, hang not down thine head in such pretty confusion, for such things do come to pass in this world, — so that, when thou art of age to think of such things, thou wilt not go portionless to thine husband.”

From this scheme Ralph Fletcher was not to be dissuaded; and accordingly, that very day, he sold to Lilian three of his best

ewes, and gave charge to Guy to see that they were well tended, even as his own.

From that time there was no more thought that Lilian would have any other home than she had found in the family of Ralph Fletcher, until that event should happen at which her kind protector had hinted; and having no particular incidents in her life to record through a few following years, I may glance briefly at the changes which took place in England while Lilian was advancing from girlhood to womanhood.

During the short reign of Edward VI., Protestantism was established as the national religion; the reading of the Scriptures was encouraged; and those who had previously been persecuted for their opposition to popish errors had a time of rest. On the other hand, it is only fair to say that the Protestant rulers of England in this reign had learned a bad lesson from

the popish rulers who had gone before them, and, in their turn, dealt harshly with their opponents, and with those who differed in opinion from them on religious matters. They did not understand the true principles of their own professed faith, which teaches us to say, —

“Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne;
But consciences and souls were made
To be the Lord’s alone.”

I wish it to be understood, however, that, though there were some instances of persecution for religion in the reign of Edward VI., these were few and (with an exception or two) light compared with those which had been known before and those which followed after. Still, there ought to have been none, nor would there have been any had the Bible been understood; and those are justly answerable for the sad mistakes

which Protestants made in that day, who had so long labored to keep the light of divine truth from enlightening the hearts of men, and from softening their manners.

Well, the young king, Edward, died after a short reign of six years; and then a melancholy change took place: for his sister Mary, who succeeded him, and became queen, was, as my readers know, a very bigoted Roman Catholic; and though she was placed upon the throne of England principally in consequence of her promise that she would not alter the Protestant religion as then established by law, she no sooner had the power in her hands than she began to persecute her Protestant subjects with such rancor and cruelty as had never before been witnessed in England.

I shall show, in the next chapter, how this change affected Lilian Butler.

CHAPTER IX.

PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

IT was five or six years after the death of Lilian's grandmother, and about four years after that of King Edward VI., that two persons, previously known in our story, were in close and secret consultation in one of the cottages of the hamlet very near to Ralph Fletcher's farm.

The cottage, or rather the hut, was mean and comfortless, as indeed were all the dwellings of the poor three hundred years ago; though within its mud walls there was apparently no lack of the substantial necessities of life, and perhaps something more.

An old woman, evidently the mistress of that small domain, was seated on a low

stool near to a wood fire which burned briskly on the earthen floor, the smoke from which ascended in light clouds, and, after filling the hut with its choking and blinding vapor, eventually found its way to a hole in the roof. The aged crone was employed in shredding herbs, which, from time to time, she cast into a pot that hung over the fire; and from the pot emanated a savory perfume, which betrayed the presence of some culinary materials besides pot-herbs.

As already intimated, this old dame was not alone. On the opposite side of the fire, and seated in the only chair the hut boasted, was an elderly personage, somewhat stout and ruddy in countenance, whose peculiar garb proclaimed that he was a member of the Roman-Catholic priesthood. With his thumbs stuck into his ample girdle, he carried on his part of the following conversation: —

“Truly, Dame Randolph, it may be as you say; but then, what the better should I have been for such haste? Bethink thee, that to me, as to thee, Ralph Fletcher’s farm hath been a very land of good things in these late years, overflowing, as one may say, with milk and honey.”

“As for milk, I grant you that, Father Jarvest,” retorted the dame; “but for honey, I warrant you Dame Fletcher sets store by it. Little honey comes my way.”

“I do but speak according to figure,” said the priest: “in mentioning honey, I had reference to the fullness of those comforts which are to be found in a thriving farm-house, where the good man and good wife be not niggardly.”

“I care not whether they be niggardly or no,” muttered Dame Randolph: “there’s as good a fish in the sea as ever came to shore in a net.”

"Thou art proverbial, good dame," said Father Jarvest with a husky laugh.

"Nay, I leave such matters to your reverence: I mean only that I hold myself by no means beholden to Dame Fletcher's favor, while there are other farmers' wives around in great plenty, ay, and gentry's wives too, who will do as much or more for me from fear."

"And yet," continued the priest, "I would fain know, Dame Randolph, the cause of this new accession of bitterness against the wench Lilian, whom I protest to be a well-favored damsel, and a modest withal. Your reason, dame; your reason?"

"Reason!" exclaimed the old woman angrily: "have I ever ceased to hate Lilian Butler, even as yourself, Father Jarvest, have ever hated her, for all your soft speeches and mild looks, from the

time she and her grandam set foot in yonder old house?"

"Thou sayest truly, dame; assuredly no great love was ever lost between us: nor do I care to withhold from thee that I like not the young woman, who is no lamb of my fold, nor ever was, I promise you."

"Of which fold does your reverence speak?" asked Dame Randolph with a cunning leer.

"Out upon you, woman!" exclaimed Father Jarvest angrily, in his turn: "dost thou reproach me, that, for the good estate of our holy church, I did for a while dissemble and hide my true faith, even as the sun hideth its bright rays behind a cloud, so that it may shine forth again when the cloud hath passed away?"

"Nay, Father Jarvest, I reproach thee not," said the woman.

"I tell thee, dame, as I have told thee

before," continued the priest, who seemed so intent on his self-justification as to lose sight for the moment of the former topic of discourse; "I tell thee that it was lawful and right, else might it have been said to me, 'With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?' Surely it would have shown but scant zeal to have yielded up my flock to — to" —

"To wolves: I know what thou wouldest say, Father Jarvest," said Mistress Randolph, interrupting the priest; "and there is no question that thou wert in the right to be Romish priest and Protestant priest by turns; for whose else would have been the shearing? But methinks, to go back to our argument, thou art in danger of losing some of those sheep which thou thinkest now so secure."

"Lilian Butler be no sheep of mine, nor ever was," repeated Father Jarvest with pretended indifference.

“But the Fletchers are, though; and thou knowest best how thou wilt answer to thy betters for suffering a heretic wolf to harbor so long with them.”

“Thou art uncivil, dame,” returned the priest, “to be naming my betters to me; but I forgive thee—I forgive thee; and as to the young heretic of whom thou speakest, have I not had my eyes on her these many a long day? and have I not waited till my stroke should be more sure? She hath been hitherto too young”—

“Younger than she have burned, thanks to the Virgin,” interposed Dame Randolph.

“I tell thee it shall be looked to, and the heretic shall not escape; but thou spakest of the Fletchers—what of them? They be heart-safe, I trow.”

“I speak not of the farmer and his dame, though I would not make too sure of them, I promise you,” continued the old woman; “but there be another Fletcher”—

"You mean Guy: think you my eyes are blinded?" said Father Jarvest contemptuously.

"I know not if your eyes be blinded, Father Jarvest, but my ears be not deafened," said Mistress Randolph, her eyes sparkling with passion; "and if I be not revenged for the slights that young man hath cast on me, and the injuries he hath wrought, may I never slice onion more!" and, rising from her low seat, she shook into the fire the lapful of refuse which her previous employment had occasioned; "and if Lilian Butler burn not at the stake, even as that rubbish" —

How now! there be more in this discomposure o' thine than I thought," said Father Jarvest, with some degree of wonder; "what hath happened to thee, dame?"

"This hath happened, sir priest," continued the old dame, without any abatement of malignity in her tone and looks: "It

was but yesterday that I was called to the farm to tend a wound which one of the serving wenches had got by handling hot iron, and was saying this charm over it, as I have ever been wont,—

‘ There came three angels out of the east ;
The one brought fire, the other brought frost ;
Out fire ; in frost ;
In the name of ’ ’—

“ And what hath this to do with Guy Fletcher ? ” demanded the priest, impatiently interrupting the wise woman.

“ I was about to tell thee, that while I was saying these words, Lilian, who was by, took me up, and bade me cease from such idleness ; while Guy Fletcher, who was also by, laughed aloud, and called me witch ; yes, he called me *witch* ! Father Jarvest,” almost shrieked the old creature, “ he did, he did ; and shall I not be revenged on him ? ”

“Truly, it seemeth that you desire to be; but wherefore shall the burning of Lilian Butler accomplish that end?” asked the priest.

The wise woman laughed a shrill laugh; and then, bending down, she hissed, as it were, between her closed gums (for teeth she had but few), into the ears of Father Jarvest, “He loveth her, and would make her his wife.”

While these two conspirators against the life of poor Lilian and the peaceful happiness of Farmer Fletcher’s household were thus holding conversation, the unconscious and innocent object of their malice was quietly pursuing her household duties in the hall of the old farm-house. As Father Jarvest had said, she was a comely damsel; and, what was yet better, the fair promise of her girlhood was abundantly fulfilled in the active usefulness of her daily life. Now that she had be-

come almost woman, her youthful piety had not made her careless and indifferent to the ordinary duties of life, but it had given her higher motives in their performance; while the circumstances of the times, and the dangers by which she knew herself to be surrounded, made her additionally thoughtful and circumspect. She re-deemed the time, knowing that the days were evil.

While engaged, then, in the work of the day, and chancing to be alone, her solitude was broken in upon by the entrance of a young man, whose handsome, open countenance might have prepossessed any one, save Dame Randolph, in his favor. He brightened up at the sight of Lilian; and, sooth to say, Lilian did not seem displeased by his appearance, unexpected as it proved to be by the first words she uttered.

“Be it indeed thyself, Guy? Methought

you were on the road to market ere now."

"Father is gone instead, and has left me to overlook the men to-day," said Guy.

"And the men be in the out-field, I think, Guy," said Lilian.

"Which is as much as saying, 'Why art not in the out-field too?' And as to that, I came but to fetch a tool from the barn; but this may wait for a short space. Lilian, now I have found thee alone, may I ask thee the question which" —

"Guy, dear Guy, not now!" said Lilian, hurriedly interrupting the young farmer.

"Ay," said he with a puzzled and disappointed air, "so dost thou say ever, 'Not now, — not now.' Lilian," he went on, "thou knowest that I have long loved thee, and surely I know that thou lovest me. Nor need I tell thee that my parents desire nothing more earnestly than to call

thee daughter. Why, then, dost thou ever say, 'Not now, — not now'?"

"Dear Guy," replied Lilian, "is this a time to speak of marrying and giving in marriage? Dost thou not know the hazard I am ever in?"

"That is the very reason why I ask thee so earnestly now to be my wife forthwith," said Guy earnestly. "In smoother times, we might well wait with more patience; but now, dear Lilian, thou needest a husband's protection."

"And what protection couldst thou afford, my poor Guy, from the strong arm of this bloody persecution? Seest thou not that the vengeance which, it may well be, hath already marked me for its victim, would the more surely fall on my husband, and my husband's kin, than though I stood alone in the matter?"

"And welcome should that vengeance be, Lily, if I did but shield thee from it by

drawing it to myself. And dost thou think that I would be so craven as to see thee in peril, and not share it with thee,—be I husband or no husband? Do I not hold thy same faith, Lilian? Have I not the same hope? Hath not the same blessed Word been my teacher these many years, before I thought of thee other than as a sister, even as it hath been thy teacher? Is not thy God my God, thy Saviour mine also? Why wilt thou not then say, ‘Thy home shall be my home’?”

“Ay, so would I, dear Guy; but I dare not say the words which must follow, ‘My cross shall be thy cross.’”

“And do I not say this for myself, dear Lilian? And bethink thee of what Christ himself did say, that he who taketh not the cross and sueth not him is not worthy of him.”

“True, dear Guy,” said Lilian; “but he said this of *his* cross, not of *mine*.”

“But wherefore shouldst thou think thus desperately of thy peril, Lilian? Thou knowest that there be many who are overlooked in these persecutions, and thou hast done naught to provoke enmity. We are here almost unknown, and who should seek our hurt? And there be another hope, Lilian,—that the cruel persecutors will have had so much of innocent blood as to be weary of their work, even as that felon fox which wrought such havoc with our poultry was at last glutted, and left them in quiet.”

“Only for a season, Guy,” rejoined Lilian with a sorrowful smile: “hadst thou not taken him in thy toils, and slain him ere his appetite returned, he would surely also have returned to his murderous repast. But be it so, Guy, that for the chosen folks’ sake these days shall be made short, which may God grant, if it be his will, so that

some be made safe; will it not be time enough then to speak of other matters?"

"Truly, it must be so if it must," replied Guy somewhat disconsolately; "but say, Lilian, dear Lilian, when that time comes, as it will, wilt thou then listen to me?"

"That will I, indeed, dear Guy," said Lilian, blushing.

CHAPTER X.

ALARM AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

IN the foregoing chapter we have shown the position which Lilian held in the farmer's family as she drew near to years of womanhood. I must add a few more particulars, however; as, for instance, that prosperity had continued to flow in upon Ralph Fletcher, so that he had considerably increased his substance during the years which had elapsed since that night when Margaret Butler sought the shelter of his roof, and was so hospitably received. Neither the farmer nor his wife ever doubted that much of this prosperity was owing to the strangers whom they thus generously entertained; and we have seen

that their gratitude did not show itself merely in words, as that which is falsely called gratitude always does.

Lilian, therefore, had shared in this prosperity. The ingenious plan by which Ralph Fletcher had contrived that his *protégée* should not be portionless, had succeeded to admiration; and at the date to which our story has arrived, Lilian had a small but flourishing flock of sheep pasturing on Ralph Fletcher's broad meadows, and a sum of money in her own possession as well.

It is true, if Lilian should become Guy's wife, these possessions of Lilian would return to enrich the family of her benefactors; but we may very well believe that such a project did not enter into the head of the farmer when he made her the owner of the mothers of her flock.

Another particular I have to mention is, that while Guy Fletcher had long since

cast off the superstitions of popery, and, what is infinitely better, had embraced the truth of the gospel, the farmer and his wife had also been moved from their former indifference and worldliness, and had listened, not without soul-profit, to the reading of God's Word from the lips of Lilian. True it is, they were too timid to avow themselves "Gospellers," which was one of the names given to Protestants; neither were they as yet sufficiently enlightened to perceive the errors of that system in the belief of which they had been bred: but they compared the teachings of the Scriptures with those of Father Jarvest, and could see how much the latter was wanting; and though they continued their attendance at mass in the parish church, and listened to the priest's voice, they far better liked to sit in their own hall, and to hear their good and dear Lilian read the Bible.

But this was done in secrecy, and often-

times with fear and trembling. Since the accession of Queen Mary, — or, at any rate, after the repealing of all King Edward's Protestant laws about religion, — there could be no more open Bible-reading on Sunday afternoons as formerly there had been; and Lilian had wisely and prudently abstained from saying or doing aught which could be strained into positive disobedience to the new popish laws. This and her tender youth may partly account for her not having as yet been troubled on the score of religion. And there was yet another reason. Father Jarvest had very truly spoken of Ralph Fletcher's farm as being "a land of milk and honey" to himself. The truth is, that in proportion as they became dissatisfied with his teaching, the farmer and his wife strove to conciliate him with their liberal hospitality, hoping thus to secure his friendship against the coming of any unforeseen trouble. You may be sure that

the wily priest partly suspected these motives, though he did not choose to express his suspicions. You may very well believe also, that, as self-interest was his ruling motive, so, if self-interest should dictate another course, no sentiment of regard or compassion for others would withhold him from taking it.

Dame Randolph also had said truly, that Father Jarvest hated Lilian as he had hated Lilian's grandmother. He could but know that his wicked life and his hypocrisy in religion were well known to her, and that she often shuddered in soul when he was near. There was malignity in his dislike of Lilian, therefore, however much he had hitherto hid it behind a mask.

But now the time was come for this malignity to be uncovered ; for he saw clearly, that, if he stirred not in the matter, Dame Randolph would be beforehand with him,

and would take from him the credit of bringing a heretic to judgment.

One day, then, about a week after the conference between the priest and the "wise woman," as all the men folks were away from home, and Mistress Fletcher and her hand-maidens were dispersed over the farm-house and yard, pursuing their daily duties, Alie Fletcher, the youngest child of the house, came running into the hall, where Lilian was preparing the mid-day meal.

"Lilian," said she, "there be men coming up to the farm; and Father Jarvest be with them."

"What men be they, Alie?" asked the young maiden, not without a feeling of dread; for it might have been especially said, that none could tell what a day or an hour might bring forth.

"I know not what men they be," replied the child, "for I was not very near, and I saw not their faces; but they have on

long black cloaks, like the old sacristan* on Sundays."

Lilian turned pale. "They be the apparitors† of whom I have heard," she thought to herself; but she only said aloud, "How many men be there, Alie?"

"Two besides the priest," said the little one.

"And how know you that they be coming hither, my birdie?" asked Lilian, as unconcernedly as she could.

"Because they turned out of the road into our in-field, Lilian, and took their way across it; which none would do, except they were coming hither," replied the child.

The argument was good; and the first impulse of Lilian was to make her escape from the hall, ere the priest and his companions arrived. There were hiding-places

* One who had the care of the church utensils.

† Officers of the ecclesiastical courts.

enough in the old ruins, she knew very well, where she might remain concealed for hours, or even days, so she were not betrayed; and of this she need have but little fear. But one moment's consideration convinced Lilian, that if, indeed, she were the object of their visit, her flight or concealment might bring injury to those whom she loved. Besides this, she revolted from the thought of hiding herself, as though she were a wrong-doer. No: she would not flee.

And then another thought naturally was, — "Oh, if Guy were at hand to protect his poor Lilian!" But this wish was dismissed much more rapidly than the previous impulse. "If he were here, he could not help me against these men," she thought; "and he would do or say that which would involve him in my own ruin: so I am glad he be not here."

You may be sure, that, while these

thoughts passed through Lilian's mind, she did not forget to lift up her soul to God for help in this time of need; for his strength to strengthen her, his wisdom to guide, and his good Spirit to comfort her. And having done this, and cast her cares and concernments upon God, who cared for her, she felt composed, and continued the work she had before her, telling the child, that, if indeed the men were coming to the farm, they would now show themselves, and in that case it would be proper to call her mother to receive the unexpected guests.

Lilian had scarcely said this, when Father Jarvest and the officers (for such indeed the two men were) entered the hall.

It needed but to look into the priest's face to see how completely he had thrown off the mask of friendship, and stood revealed as an open foe. He spoke not to Lilian, save to command that she left not

the room ; while he desired the child, who yet lingered, looking at the strangers, to bring her mother to speak with him.

“Peace be to you, Mistress Fletcher,” said he, when the farmer’s wife came hurrying in : “I will not say peace to thine house ; for there be one present to whom that word peace would be a mis-spoken word.”

“What means your reverence?” said Mistress Fletcher faintly. “I trust there be nothing gone wrong.”

“There be something gone wrong, dame,” said the priest, “when a true daughter of the Church, as I trust thou art, dost reset * and sustain her enemies in the bosom of thine household.”

“Your reverence, your reverence, these be dreadful words !” exclaimed the farmer’s wife, looking round her with terror.

“Ay ; and it will be found that the just

* Harbor.

anger of holy Church is yet more dreadful," continued Father Jarvest. "But fear not, woman: no harm shall come to thee nor to thy husband, so thou do answer truly the questions I have to ask. But beware: if thou concealest the smallest matter, it will go ill with thee."

"I know not what there be that I should conceal," said Mrs. Fletcher faintly; "but methought your reverence was too good a friend to us to be frightening two poor helpless women thus."

"There be no earthly friendships which may stand in the way of pious duty," said Father Jarvest with an air of severe virtue; "and think not, good woman, that it be true friendship to hide sinfulness even in our best beloved. It is truly better that one rebellious member be cut off, than that all perish in the fire."

While this conversation was going on, Lilian had time for reflection. It was

certain that she was aimed at; and she could gather from what fell from the priest, that, although her own destruction was determined on, the safety of the farmer's family was not positively endangered.

This thought greatly encouraged her; and, though her countenance was pallid, her heart was strengthened.

It was far otherwise with Dame Fletcher, however; and it wanted only the terms "rebellious member" and "perish in the fire" to put the finishing stroke to her prostration of mind; and it was with difficulty that she could be brought to understand the interrogations of the priest.

"Is there not a printed book in this house called the Bible, written in the vulgar tongue?" he asked.

"It may be so," gasped the poor woman, looking round in bewilderment: "there be a book which — but, Saint Catherine help

me!—I knew not that it was wicked to listen to the good words.”

“She hath confessed it,” said one of the apparitors to the other, significantly, as he opened his mouth for the first time.

“There is such a Book, then? bring it hither,” said the priest.

“As I am a true, though poor, ignorant woman, I know not where the Book be,” said Mistress Fletcher, looking helplessly toward Lilian. And this indeed was true: for, since the persecutions had become rife, Lilian had taken the precaution of concealing her Bible in a certain hiding-place, which she contrived for it in her own chamber; and no one beside herself certainly knew whence she drew it when she brought it forth from time to time. But Dame Fletcher’s answer evidently displeased the priest, who said sternly, “Trifle not, woman: know you not that your own safety hangeth, as it were, on a thread?”

Lilian came forward a step or two, and interposed her slight and graceful form between the priest and the terrified woman.

"Hear me, sir," said she. "It is true indeed that Mistress Fletcher knows not where the Book may be; nor is she answerable for it being in her house. The Book is mine, and I have hidden it; not because it is evil, but because I have long looked for this day. But now, sir, since, as you say, it will save Mistress Fletcher from further trouble, if it will please you to follow me, I will show you where the Book is, and you must do your pleasure both with it and with me."

"The wench hasteth to her own destruction," whispered the apparitor who had not yet spoken to his fellow, who nodded and smiled, while a gleam of satisfaction passed over the countenance of Father Jarvest.

“It is well,” he said: “lead on, then, to this hiding-place.”

“But I must yet have your promise that no harm shall come therefrom to this kind and dear family who have protected me from my very childhood,” said Lilian.

This was more than the farmer’s wife could bear; for, springing forward, she cast her arms round the maiden, and cried, “Lilian, my child, think not of me! care naught for me! think of thyself, Lilian!” A gentler heart than had ever beaten in Father Jarvest’s bosom since he had been a priest would surely have melted at this tender scene, at least into momentary compassion. But he only grimly smiled; and bidding Lilian to take heed that the only hope for the coming off harmless of Mistress Fletcher and her husband and others in the household was to be found in the maiden’s frank and free confession of her guilt and crime, he directed her to show him the hiding-place of which she had spoken.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FALLING OF THE FIRST STROKE.

LILIAN led the way to her chamber: it was the same apartment that had given her grandmother and herself shelter on their first night at the hospitable farm, now more than nine years ago. But many comforts had been added from time to time, and, though still coarse and homely, it was a pleasant chamber.

“Thou art dainty,” said Father Jarvest, looking round: “it will be well for thee if thou stretchest not thyself on a harder couch to-night.”

“The Lord’s will be done,” said Lilian softly; “but methinks, sir, you came not hither to scan my poor lodgings, save to re-

ceive this at my hand ; ” and with trembling haste she drew from a dark recess in the wall behind her bed the Bible which above all things else she loved.

The priest took it eagerly in his hands, though with much show of repugnance, as though the very touch of it were hateful to him.

“ Ay,” said he, opening it, and then hastily shutting it again with a clap, “ this be the cursed book, sure enough ; ” and then he handed it to one of the apparitors.

“ Thou wilt not take it from me, in very deed, sir ? ” said Lilian tearfully and pleadingly. “ The book was my grandam’s, and I would not be separated from it.”

“ Nor shalt thou for the next hour,” retorted Father Jarvest ; “ for thou and the heretic Bible shall leave this house together, where ye have both been harbored too long.”

“And where must I be taken, sir?” asked Lilian.

“Thou wilt soon know that, wench,” replied the priest carelessly; “but by your good leave, maiden, or without it, I would fain see what more this cunning nest of thine hideth;” and he put his hand into the recess. “Ha!” he continued, “here be moneys, methinks;” and he drew out a small leathern bag, in which, when untied, was found a little store of silver.

“It is but the price I have at times received for the fleeces of my little flock of sheep, as Master Fletcher knoweth,” said Lilian quietly; and then the thought struck her that with this mammon of unrighteousness she might perhaps make friends; and she added, “Take the money, sir, and do as you list with it; I give it freely: but suffer me to remain, and restore to me my Book.”

It may be, that had there been no wit-

nesses this argument might have prevailed ; for Father Jarvest was always necessitous and greedy of filthy lucre. But he dared not trust to the silence of those who were with him, besides that the remembrance of Dame Randolph came to the aid of his enforced abstinence and honesty. So he said,—

“Ha ! thou wouldst bribe me ? methinks this will tell but little for thee hereafter. And as to this money, how know I that it be not stolen ? With your good leave — or without it, as I have before said — we will take charge of it, as well as of thee and thy accursed Book. And now,” said he, once more going to the dark recess, and bringing out in his hand a small book of a few pages, “resolve me what this be ;” and he put it into the hand of one of his attendants.

It was the little book which, years and years before, Guy Fletcher had bought for

Lilian, and which she had promised to keep for his sake.

“Holy Saint Simon !” exclaimed the apparitor, crossing himself, as he looked into the book ; “but here be matter enough to warrant our making sure of the maiden, letting alone the other Book ;” and thereupon he read the following verses of the rhyming satire : —

“An cursed fox, lay hid in rocks

This long and many a day,

Devouring sheep, while he might creep,

None might him shape away.

.

The hunter’s Christ, that hunts in haste ;

The hounds are Peter and Paul ;

The pope is the fox ; Rome is the rocks

That rubs us on the gall.”

.

“Hold, hold !” exclaimed Father Jarvest, when the apparitor had read thus far ; “this be rank blasphemy indeed, and needs look-

ing to. Maiden, where got you this pestilent heresy?"

"It matters not, sir; I freely acknowledge it to be mine, and no other's beside mine," said Lilian, reflecting that, should she acknowledge to have received it from Guy Fletcher, she should assuredly bring danger upon his head, besides the trouble she knew he would be in on her account.

"It will be seen whether or not it matters," said the priest; "and meanwhile we shall take the liberty of securing this book also. And now methinks we have proof enough for one day of this maiden's guilt; and you be our prisoner, Mistress Lilian."

A few minutes later, Father Jarvest, with the two officers, between whom walked poor Lilian, with her hands bound together, departed from the farm-house, leaving behind such a sense of helpless, hopeless misery and despair as had never before been known there; at least, in Ralph Fletcher's

time. On the scene which followed, when the farmer and Guy Fletcher and the farmmen returned an hour afterward to dinner, and found all the females and children bathed in tears, and filling the air with their lamentations, and came at length to know that Lilian was in the hands of cruel persecutors, — on that scene I shall not dwell. But it may be mentioned, that, as the prisoner and her captors passed through the hamlet, Dame Randolph stood at the door of her hut, clapping her hands gleefully, and pointing with her skinny finger to poor Lilian, while she filled the air with shrill screams of delight.

CHAPTER XII.

A DARK DAY AT EVENING.

SEVERAL months passed away; and the dark cloud which had overshadowed the household of Ralph Fletcher thickened, and seemed ready to break upon them in all its fury. Vain had every effort been to save the steadfast young martyr. True, her youth, and modesty, and beauty had pleaded powerfully in her favor, so that many men of influence, who had looked with indifference, if not with approval, on the execution of so many Protestants, as being a needful though sharp remedy against what were deemed to be wicked and fatal errors, were induced to exert their influence in obtaining Lilian's

pardon. But the cruel Bonner, Bishop of London, was Lilian's judge ; and all the favor that could be obtained from him was the putting-off of the execution, and a promise, that, if " the obstinate young heretic " would recant, the queen's mercy might be extended to her.

But Lilian had been immovable. Not that she courted death ; not that the fearful burning to which she had been cruelly condemned had no terrors for her.

Lilian was young ; her short life had been neither useless nor unhappy ; and it is hard for the young to become reconciled, when in health and vigor, to the thought of being suddenly cut off from the enjoyment of life ; and then, to die such a death as that to which Lilian was doomed !

But faith had been triumphant. Lilian would not give up the truths which had been sealed upon her soul by the Divine Spirit, — truths which she had first heard

from her martyred father's lips, and afterward at her grandmother's knee. The words which she fancied she had heard in a dream so many years ago had never been forgotten by her: "Lilian, Lilian, be thou faithful to the death, and to thee shall be given a crown of life." And who shall tell how much Lilian was indebted to that remembrance, under God's blessing, for the constancy with which from time to time she had passed through the ordeal of those priestly exhortations, judicial examinations, friendly prayers and entreaties, and harsh threatenings, to which, through so many months, she had been subjected?

But these trials were now over, and Lilian sat alone in her dark and dreary prison cell, awaiting the coming day, when she should be conveyed thence to the market-place, and burned at the stake. Let us leave her for a little while, and enter the old farm-house.

The farmer and his wife sat by the cold, empty, cavernous hearth; for though the winter was coming on (it being late in November), and the weather was dreary and cold, they dared not look upon a fire, which would have brought before them such fearful images of the terrible sufferings which their poor Lilian would be called upon to endure on the morrow. So they sat, cheerless and weeping; for Ralph Fletcher's manhood had left him, and he bowed his head, and sobbed like a child. Around them were their younger children, weeping also, and crying out for poor Lilian; while the handmaidens passed to and fro unheeded by their mistress, and thinking little of their household duties, while they added to the general distress by their piteous moans.

The shades of evening had fallen, but none spoke of lighting the candle or lamp, when presently was heard a familiar voice;

and, through the gloom, the form of Dame Randolph was dimly discerned, — of Dame Randolph, who had been one of the witnesses against Lilian Butler, as having often and often spoken against the pope and the religion of Rome, and also as having read the English Bible in her hearing.

“Woman, foul murderess! what dost thou here?” demanded Ralph Fletcher, starting from his woeful posture at the sound of her ill-omened voice. “Is it not enough that thou hast slain our poor child, that thou comest to boast of thy deed?”

“Ralph Fletcher,” said the old woman, “thou mayest say thy say: I care not for thy words; though, were they repeated, thou mightest thyself be brought into trouble; but that will I not do, for already have I hell enough in my heart.”

“Dost thou repent thee, then, of thy evil deed, poor woman?” asked Mistress Fletcher sorrowfully.

“I know not if I repent or not, mistress; I know not what repentance be: but I have that within me which tells me that what I have done to Lilian Butler will sink me to perdition;” and she uttered a lamentable cry as she said this.

“Woman, carry thy croaking hence!” shouted the farmer fiercely. “What matters if such as thee” —

“Ralph, Ralph!” whispered the weeping wife to her husband, “give not hard words to the poor wretch: bethink thee that our poor Lilian freely forgave her; also” — and here she spoke yet lower, so that none but her husband could hear — “remember that Guy lies in her power and Father Jarvest’s for the words he hath spoken, and for having declared that the little book found in Lilian’s chamber was given to her by himself.”

“Peace, peace, Bridget,” said Ralph. “I am come to that pass that I may almost

say I care not what further they may do; for I am weary of life itself, and could almost envy poor Lilian her speedy deliverance. But for thy sake, wench, I will hold my peace. Let the woman stay or go, as pleaseth her: I will not say her nay."

"I will not trouble thee long, Master Fletcher," said Dame Randolph with more composure. "I came but to ask thee, mistress, hast thou seen Lilian Butler this day?"

"Surely: my husband, myself, and Guy were with her two hours in her prison-house."

"And will she not recant, and so save herself from her doom?" asked Dame Randolph eagerly.

"Nay: had she a thousand lives, methinks she would throw them all away in this cause," said the farmer's wife, sobbing.

A deep groan burst from the visitor, as though her last hope had now yielded

up life. After a short, painful silence, she whispered, —

“Said Lilian Butler aught of me?”

“Yes, truly: she said she forgave thee, and all her enemies and persecutors, with all her heart; and that she prays God not to lay her death to their charge.”

“And be there no hope that Lilian Butler’s life may be saved?” asked Dame Randolph again, after another brief space.

Mistress Fletcher shook her head sadly. “There be no hope,” she said, “though Guy will not have it so; and he hath ridden this day from the prison-house toward London, with Sir Peter Russell, to petition once more for the life of the poor child: but alack, alack! it will be in vain.” And once more the farmer’s wife broke out into convulsive sobs, covering her face with her apron.

Meanwhile the visitor glided from the apartment, and was seen no more that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE STAKE.

NOVEMBER 18, 1558. It was evening; but in the little town was much confusion and excitement. In the market-place were many hundreds of people, gazing in the fading light of that autumn day at a pile of fagots placed around a strong wooden stake or post which was firmly embedded in the ground: and though some profane and godless men cast scurrile jests regarding these preparations, those who looked on were for the most part gloomy, thoughtful, sad, and silent; or, if they spoke to each other, it was in subdued tones or whispers.

The truth is, that the better sort of

people in England began to weary of these scenes of martyrdom, which during the last four years of Mary's reign had been the disgrace of the land, and the infamy of all who had joined in such persecutions. Nearly three hundred victims, of all ages, from tender youth to extreme old age, and of almost every rank in life, had been burned to death because of their religion; and Englishmen might well ask one another when and where all this was to end.

I have already said that the sympathies of some in high position had been excited toward Lilian Butler because of her youth and modesty: I may add, that admiration was also generally felt toward her by those who had witnessed the constancy with which she had refused to deny the sentiment which had brought her into trouble, and, at the same time, that patience with which she had borne the cruel taunts of her persecutors and judges.

But neither sympathy nor admiration had availed to save her life. Lilian Butler was doomed to die, as multitudes of fellow-martyrs in that age and other ages had also died, "for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

As the hour for the burning drew near, the tumult and excitement increased. Presently torches were lighted, and by their murky glare the prison-doors were thrown open; and, guarded by a numerous body of constables and other officers, Lilian Butler stepped forth into the street, and walked firmly toward the place of execution.

She was not greatly altered. Long weeks of bodily confinement and mental torture inflicted by her enemies had paled her cheek, and weakened her strength: but her innocent and marked beauty was unimpaired; and as she moved onwards, her countenance lighted up with joy and peace unspeakable, and a loving smile on

her lips, it seemed to those who looked on as though some celestial visitant, too holy and pure for our wretched earth, were about to take her painless flight to her native skies.

She was clothed in white: she had desired this, and her wish had been granted. It had been Mistress Fletcher's last labor of love to make for her poor child that white linen robe of martyrdom. But because of its whiteness was shown more plainly to all that Lilian carried in her hand a dark-looking volume, which she pressed very closely to her bosom. It was the old Bible which had been her life-long companion and comforter. Think not, however, that she had been permitted access to this Book in her long and dreary imprisonment. *Then* it had been carefully kept from her; but *now* — now that she was to die — her book of pestilent heresies, her English Protestant Bible in the

vulgar tongue, should be burned with her. There would be one the less in the land. There was a refinement of cruelty in this, to keep from the young martyr the Word of life when it would have comforted her in her tribulations, and to restore it when it was no longer needed. But Lilian felt not the cruelty. Her thoughts and soul were far, far above the reach of further persecutions: they were ascending to Him whose own words had been her stay and support and safeguard: "Be thou faithful to the death, and to thee shall be given a crown of life."

Once, during the course of her passage from the prison-gates to the place of death, were Lilian's thoughts brought down to earth and earthly things and earthly affections. Somewhere about midway between the prison and the stake, there was an outcry in the crowd; and then, rushing in

through the guard, sprung a woman, who cast her arms around Lilian's neck, and cried aloud in tones of agonized love, —

“My Lilian, my Lilian! and have they the heart to murder thee thus? And be there no help for it against these cruel men?”

Alas! no: there was no help for it to be found; and, receiving a gentle kiss and a fervent blessing from the dear one whom she had nourished from childhood upwards, Mistress Fletcher fell back into her husband's arms, and was conveyed senseless from the throng.

And so they drew near to the dark death-pile; and there stood Father Jarvest, crucifix in hand, waiting to offer once more to the resolute maiden a remission of her sentence if she did but at that hour recant her errors, and (as he said) make peace with the true Church. But Lilian motioned him aside.

"Had I feared to die, I had listened to thee ere now," she softly said; and then she added, "I thank my God that I can say, not vain-boastingly, but in his strength, 'Death is sopun up in victory. Death, where is thy victory? Death, where is thy sting?'" *

Scarcely had Lilian spoken these words when faint shouts were heard at a long distance off. They approached nearer and nearer: then there was a moving of the multitude, like the uneasy heaving and murmuring of many waters. Then more shouts, and more confusion, and more pressing to and fro. Then came the clattering of horses' hoofs, faint at first, but approaching nearer and nearer and nearer, as in furious and urgent haste. Then the crowd divided to make way for two eager horsemen, who spurred their horses up to the

* 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55, Wycliffe's version.

unlighted pile, until, reaching it, one sprung down, and cast his arms around the white-robed victim, crying in hoarse tones, like one awaking from a fearful dream, "Thank God, we be not too late! — Lilian, thou art safe!" while the other horseman, standing up in his stirrups, proclaimed aloud, —

"Good people, you all know me, and you now hear me when I say that this execution must be stayed."

"And wherefore stayed?" demanded Father Jarvest boldly.

"Because," retorted Sir Peter Russell (for he it was), — "because I have brought a pardon with me for the maiden," and he held up a parchment to the people's gaze; "AND BECAUSE QUEEN MARY IS DEAD, AND QUEEN ELIZABETH REIGNS!"

"Queen Mary dead? — didst thou say dead?" said Father Jarvest, his face changing to many hues of fear and terror.

"In good sooth, I said dead, sir priest;



LILLIAN AT THE STAKE.

she died yester-morning early: and methinks thou wilt have to change thy religion once again."

The priest staid not the hearing-out of the deserved taunt: and well it was for him that he speedily withdrew, and that the guards of poor Lilian also followed him close; for in another minute rose a shout, the like of which had never before been heard in that place; and, ere five minutes had passed, Lilian and Guy Fletcher had been borne triumphantly through the crowd, with cries of joy that the persecuting queen had been called to her awful account.

"Good friends," said Sir Peter Russell, when the tumult had somewhat subsided, "young Guy Fletcher and myself are somewhat wearied, and our horses be blown, though we have changed them oft; for, since yester-morning, we have ridden twice seventy miles: suffer us, therefore, to depart to

my house, and take Lilian Butler thither also. To-morrow shall be a new day with us all."

So Sir Peter, with Guy Fletcher and the rescued Lilian, was conducted to his house, not half a mile from the town, where presently they were joined by Ralph Fletcher and his wife. But I must draw a veil over the glad scene which followed.

But the people did not depart; and presently a brisk youth set fire to the fagots: and so the pile in which the young martyr was to have been consumed became a bonfire to celebrate her strange deliverance, while from the steeple of the church hard by rang out joyful peals; for the persecuting queen was dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST.

SPRING--TIME was come ; and on one bright May Day was there joyful bustle in the old farm-house. From early dawn, neighbors had been flocking in ; and in the great hall, which was decorated with early flowers and fresh green-leaved boughs, was spread a feast of good things in such profusion, that, had twice as many guests arrived, there would have been enough for all, and to spare. And while the lengthened-out glad breakfast lasted, sat Sir Peter Russell at one end of the board, and his lady at the other, busily dispensing the dainties, which, for the most part, were of their own providing.

There were many of the surrounding gentry there besides Sir Peter and his lady; and among them was a stranger who listened with moistened eyes and a rejoiced heart to the gratulations offered to him, from time to time, on behalf of his young kinswoman. For the stranger was Master Edward Lisle, the mother's brother of Lilian, who had been sought out by Sir Peter Russell, and had been brought from the far north to witness the marriage of his niece.

For this was the wedding morning; and presently the procession set forward to the little church where Guy Fletcher was to become Lilian's husband: but not at the hands of Father Jarvest; for he had before changed his professed faith too often to be trusted again. And though, on the re-establishment of Protestantism, he professed contrition for his former errors, it availed him nothing: and he soon disappeared from the scene of his former

misdoings; and with him also vanished Dame Randolph, the wise woman, after being once rescued from the rage of the populace by the interposition of Lilian Butler.

But it was wonderful to hear the loud shouts of rejoicing with which the air rang when Lilian re-appeared from the little church, leaning on the arm of her husband, and with such a flush of happiness on her countenance as showed that the near approach to a martyr's death, which she had experienced, had not destroyed her power to enjoy the blessings of life with which it had pleased her heavenly Father to surround her when that trial of her faith had passed away.

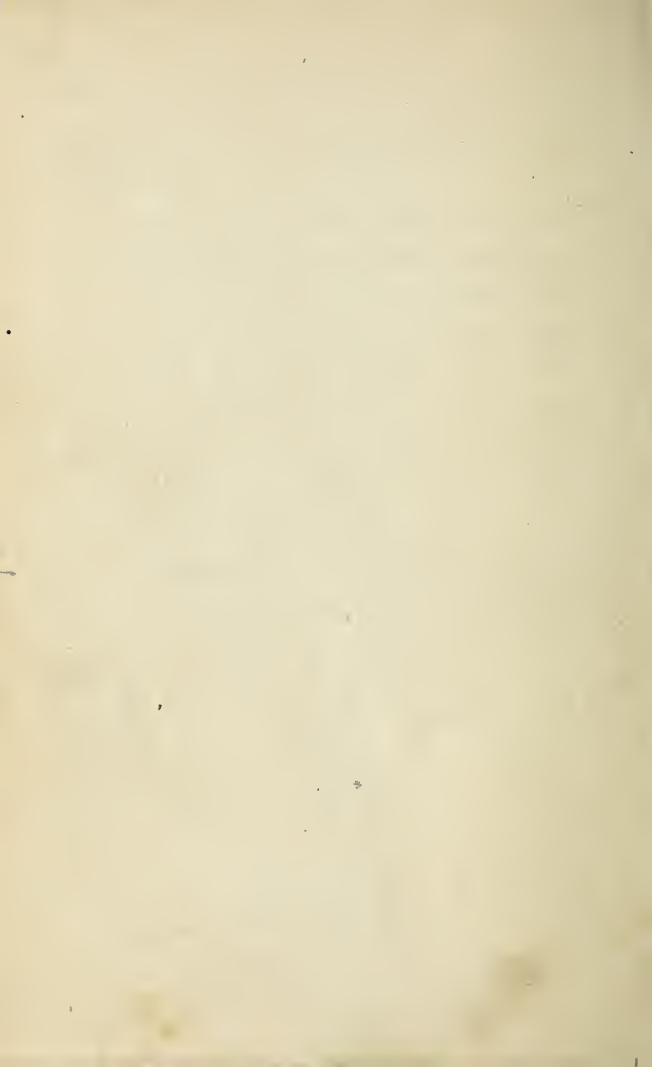
And in Lilian's experience in after-life, as well as in the observations of those who surrounded her, was shown a truth which all will do well to consider; namely, that they who are best prepared for death,

come how or when it may, are also the best prepared to live.

On the day of their marriage, Guy Fletcher took his wife Lilian to the farm which Sir Peter Russell had offered him, and had also partly stocked for him; and many years afterward, when Lilian was the happy mother of sons and daughters, much wealth was bequeathed to her by her kinsman, Master Edward Lisle, with whom, after being brought together, she had ever maintained loving intercourse. But her highest wealth was in that blessing of God to which no sorrow is added; and next to this was the love of her husband, with whom she walked through the pilgrimage of this world as a fellow-heir of "the grace of life."

THE END.







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